

THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY



MAKING HISTORY TOGETHER

LIVING WITH THE LAND: NATIVE PEOPLES OF SOUTHERN OREGON

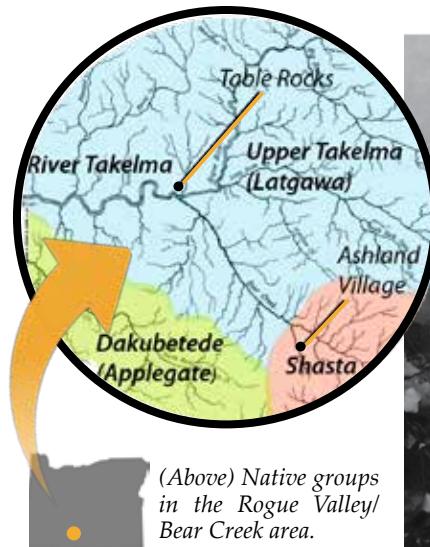
MARCH 2 5 PM

by Dennis Gray and Jeff LaLande

When the first miners and farmers came to the Rogue Valley they occupied lands that Native inhabitants, whose ancestors had come to North America 15,000 years (or more) earlier, long claimed as their own. These indigenous groups included members of the Shasta who lived in the southern part of the Bear Creek Valley (including a main village where the Ashland Plaza is today), the River Takelma, who lived in winter villages along the Rogue River downstream from the Table Rocks, and the Upland Takelma (or Latgawa), who mainly ranged from the Table Rocks upstream and along such tributaries as Little Butte Creek, Elk Creek, and lower Bear Creek. Each of these groups had similar cultural traits.

Although they regularly used low-intensity fire to enhance the productivity of food-gathering areas, neither the Takelma nor Shasta practiced what we know as agriculture, apart from growing tobacco from seed. Instead they made their living in a “seasonal round” all across the landscape: hunting game, gathering a wide variety of edible plants, catching and storing large quantities of salmon.

To the west, in the Applegate Valley, lived the Dakubetede; like groups living along the lower-Rogue River and the Coast, the Dakubetede spoke a dialect of the Athapascan language family. These Athapascan speakers are thought to be among the most recent arrivals to our area and apparently originated from somewhere



(Above) Native groups in the Rogue Valley/Bear Creek area.

(Right) Jennie Jane, was the last Takelma Indian to live in Jacksonville. Prior to her passing in 1893 she prepared the elaborate Indian burial robe shown here, a buckskin dress to which was attached colored beads, sea shells, and transparent pebbles.

SOHS #1165



in present-day Alaska or northwestern Canada and migrated southward within the past one thousand years or so.

The Takelma, Shasta, and Dakubetede were organized into small groups that, during the winter, lived in wood-plank lodges in semi-permanent villages along the river and major streams; in the warmer months they then resumed their yearly round to seasonal base camps in the uplands. An extended family might have certain places, such as a favorite acorn-gathering oak grove or a particular fishing

spot, which they considered their own “private” property -- that is, special places that could be used by others only with permission. Each group tended to have its own “head man” (generally the wealthiest older male), and was basically independent of each other in terms of political allegiance and control. Only later, in the face of

(Continued on page 2)

Masthead: Fifteen year-old Mae Nealon, one of four sisters featured in the story on page 10.

SOHS #20879

White invasion, did Native people appear to develop the role of “chiefs” holding wider influence over a number of villages.

A man customarily married a woman not from his own village, but from some other village -- even the village of a completely different language group. This practice helped forge bonds of mutual assistance between groups -- something particularly valuable during times of food shortage or other stress. After the groom had paid a hard-bargained “bride price” to her family, the woman would come to reside in her husband’s village. Child-rearing and many other tasks -- which included weaving beautiful (and even water-tight) baskets; digging up immense quantities of camas bulbs and slow-cooking them in rock-heated “ovens” beneath the ground; grinding bushels of acorns into powdery flour and then laboriously using water to leach out the flour’s bitter tannic acid -- were the province of women. Men hunted, fished, made certain tools, traded, and fought enemies; in the winter, men spent much of their time in each other’s company at the village’s sweat lodge.

Takelma, Shasta, and Dakubetede people believed that their earthly world was inhabited by countless unseen spirits, including spirits that inhabited certain mountains, rock outcrops, trees, animals, river eddies. The spirits could be very powerful,

Native American Baskets: These woven baskets from the Collections department Native American collection are representative of various tribes from northern California and southern Oregon. These pieces date approximately from around 1900, and were most likely used as trade baskets..

SOHS Collection



and their power might be either beneficial or harmful to an individual person. Having spirit power on one’s side could enhance a person’s hunting success, make for an easy childbirth, or inflict ill health/injury upon an enemy. Channeling the power of various spirits, for good or for ill, was the goyo (the Takelma term for a shaman) -- a specially endowed man or woman whom we might today consider to be part healer, part seer, and part magician. Being a goyo could be profitable (i.e., they were paid in return for their healing powers). It could also be dangerous: an unsuccessful shaman might be blamed by a family for an ill relative’s death, and then be killed by them. There was a strong focus on an

individual’s social rank and acquisition of material wealth (often in the form of exotic dentalia shells, traded from hundreds of miles away on the northern Northwest Coast). But this seeming “materialistic” outlook was more an expression of how much spirit power one possessed, that power made manifest through success and wealth.

The Takelma and other Native people had many wonderful stories. As with so many Native stories, Coyote was a favorite of such tales. Coyote’s impatience, as well as his frequent lustful or gluttonous escapades (which often ended with unfortunate consequences for him) became life lessons to a story’s listeners about the necessity for self-control and proper behavior. Among the many fascinating Takelma legends is that of Alwilamchaldis, the culture hero who, long ago, had come up the Rogue River, “making things better.” But, alas, he became an unruly sort, causing much conflict among the people. Thus, the spirit world turned Alwilamchaldis into Mt. McLoughlin, so that he could no longer provoke disagreement and hostility. On top of Mt. McLoughlin lived the mythic figure of Talsunne, or “Acorn Woman.” Each spring she came down from the snowy summit into the valley’s oak groves,



Descendants of Southern Oregon Indians dressed in ceremonial regalia participating at the 1917 Siletz Indian Fair.

Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

(Continued on page 3)

flinging pieces of her flesh onto the trees' branches -- magical flesh that grew into that year's crop of acorns. The huge vertical grooves visible near the base of the east face of Lower Table Rock (noticeable to west-bound travelers on Table Rock Road when approaching the lower Rock) were left by Beaver's gigantic incisor teeth, when he tried to gnaw down Table Rock as a favor to the people.

Much about the language, social structure, and religious beliefs of these cultures is lost to us. What we do know comes from the accounts given by elders during the early twentieth century. Thus, what we do know is owed to a few Takelma, Shasta, and Dakubetede elders who shared their still-acute memories with anthropologists a century ago. It is truly precious information for us today to learn from and appreciate.



A note: In recent decades, the term "American Indian" or "Indian" came to be considered "politically incorrect" or "insensitive" by some people, who prefer to use the term "Native American." However, many members of federally recognized Indian Tribes (note that word Indian there) still prefer to be called "Indians," in part because that is the term that was used in the treaties that established their reservations and reserved to them various hunting and fishing rights. To them, the word "Indian" is an important diplomatic and legal term that they still honor. In Oregon, for example, there are the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians as well as the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribes of Indians; they wear the name Indian proudly. (Although the term "Indian" came from Christopher Columbus's mistaken belief that the people he encountered in 1492 and later were inhabitants of what he believed to be the Indian and or "East Indies," do remember that the term "American" is also a European invention; it is derived from the name of an Italian explorer, Amerigo Vespucci.) The term "First Nations" is used in Canada, but, unlike the term "Indian," it has no formal legal/traditional use in the United States.

TECUMTUM: THE CHIEF WHO NEVER GAVE UP

Tecumtum ranks alongside other great Native American resistance figures such as Tecumseh, Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and Geronimo. But few have ever heard of him



Tecumtum in his final years

Known in the language of the Chasta Costa people as "Elk Killer" -- American settlers and miners called him "Chief John," "Old John," and "Tyee [chief] John" -- Tecumtum was the leader of one of a number of Athapaskan-speaking groups that occupied the Illinois Valley, lowermost Rogue River, and coastal areas of southwestern Oregon; he saw his homeland along Deer Creek (near present-day Selma) overrun with miners in the early 1850s. Between 1851 and 1854 he signed three separate treaties with the US Government in hopes of peace. With violence unabated, Tecumtum moved his band for a brief period to the Table Rock Reservation, across the Rogue River from the mouth of Bear Creek.

On October 7, 1855, White militiamen attacked a band of peaceful Upland Takelmas camped near the mouth of Little Butte Creek, bringing about the third and final Rogue River War. In response Tecumtum is said to have vowed to "fight till he died." He successfully stood off U.S. Army and pioneer-militia troops, postponing defeat until late Spring of 1856.

In late October 1855, a number of lower Rogue and Illinois Valley Indians soundly defeated militia volunteers and Army soldiers at the Battle of Hungry Hill, on upper Grave Creek. Having relocated his men, women, and children down into remote canyons of the lower River River country, Tecumtum led his warriors into battle at Big Bend in May 1856, nearly defeating the Army troops until a large rescue party of soldiers arrived on the scene. Without ammunition, and with his followers now exhausted and starving, he was then forced

to surrender.

Tecumtum and his Chasta Costa band were then removed to the Coast (Siletz) Indian Reservation where he challenged violations of treaty promises that were not being honored and demanded to return to his beloved Deer Creek.

When one of Tecumtum's sons was shot dead by the government agent during an arrest attempt, the old chief roused his followers and threatened revenge. He was then arrested together with another son condemned to imprisonment at the Army's San Francisco Presidio and put aboard a southbound ship. Both men were subsequently wounded during an unsuccessful attempt to take over the ship.

Tecumtum remained imprisoned till 1862, when appeals from his daughters led to his return to Oregon, this time to the Grand Ronde Reservation. But later that same year, he was once again jailed for inciting former Rogue River country inhabitants to return to their homeland.

The elderly chief died on the Grand Ronde Reservation in 1864.

J.M.L.

IMAGINE: THE VISIONARY IDEAS OF JOHN BEESON

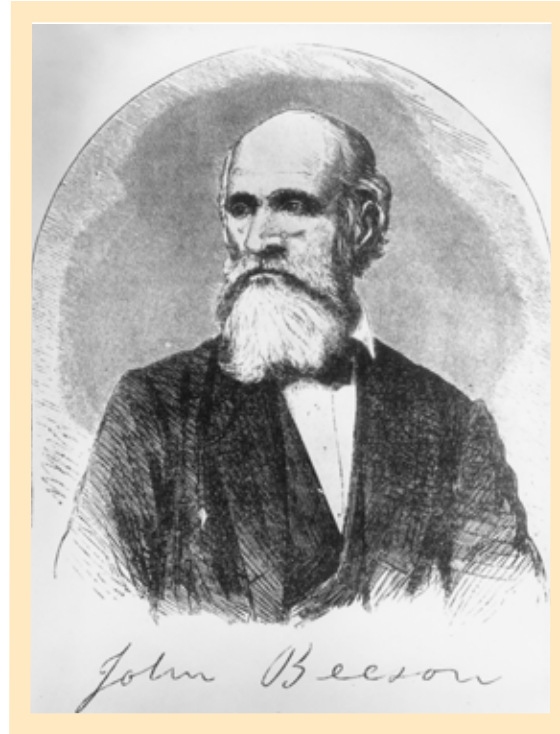
By Jan Wright

As the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Oregon during the Rogue River Indian wars of the 1850s, Joel Palmer received many letters from private citizens, business men, military and political leaders. Most of those letters were asking for favors, airing grievances, making status reports, and detailing conflicts between the races. One letter to Palmer from John Beeson, written in June of 1856, stands out as an extraordinarily different document.

Starting with missionaries, peace treaties, volunteer armies, and military forts, Oregon Indian policy had followed the pattern set in other times and places in the states. Under Palmer, extermination fever led to the removal the Indians of southern Oregon from their ancient homes. In order to protect Native populations, Palmer selected as reserves two spots on the Oregon map far from the Rogue River and its tributaries. As the Indians “surrendered” or were defeated in battle, they were taken to either Siletz or Grand Ronde.

Some whites, especially those who lived on or near the lands proposed as reservations, expressed a “not in my backyard” mentality. Others objected to government money being spent on housing, clothing, and feeding Indians who could just as well be annihilated to save the expense.

For many Oregonians Indian removal was an exercise in forgetting, a curtain drawn on their own consciences. Once the Indians left the Rogue Valley, many whites continued to bilk public funds for their “service” in the war, stake their livelihoods and political campaigns on the glory of it, and virtually erase the memory of a people who had occupied that piece of earth for thousands of years. There was little thought given to how the Indians would live, how they would recover from their losses, or what could be



SOHS #4381

John Beeson was one of the few settlers who spoke out against Pioneer abuses of Native Americans.

done about their future.

The letter, written by John Beeson as the removal policies were implemented, shows that he had no intention of forgetting the Indians once they were tucked away on reservations. Although Beeson reluctantly accepted the reality of the reservation system for Native Peoples, he envisioned it as more than just a place for them to disappear.

He communicated a full spectrum of topics on how to initiate healing and maintain sensitivity to the Indians in their new settings. He blueprinted a fundamentally humane structure on the reserve that would cater to their wants and needs and prove to the white world that Indians were human and capable of advancement.

Beeson had reason to feel compassion for the Indians. He too had been exiled from his Oregon home at about the same time as the Natives of the Rogue Valley. Placing the blame for the Indian war squarely on white

shoulders had incurred the wrath of his neighbors. After repeated death threats against him, he fled his Oregon home and went on to become a national spokesperson for Native Peoples. Nearly a month after his expulsion from home Beeson wrote to Palmer. He began with an apology for his presumptive offerings admitting that his theories about Indians came from “nature and cause and effect” rather than face to face observations or experiences. He believed that the original state of Indian culture was moral and “sublime” but that contact with the vices and violence of the whites, had “lowered them from their original standard.” Restoring their bodies, minds, and environment would take not only “science and intellect” but would also require attention to art and beauty.

As a vegetarian and water cure practitioner, Beeson had strong opinions on what the Indians should eat and how they should “recover the sick and preserve ... health.”

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He suggested that they be allowed to maintain their traditional diets as much as possible, consuming "simple and unconcentrated" roots, fish, and berries. No tobacco, whiskey, pork, coffee, or tea should be given. Beeson declared that fine flour was constipating and should be avoided. To prevent a dependency on greedy white millers for their flour, he proposed that each Native household grind just enough coarse flour for its daily bread. To prove that point, Beeson included with the letter an 1855 Water Cure Journal



Oregon Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Joel Palmer

Oregon. Hist. Soc Research Lib., Orhi362

article on that very topic.

Beeson had very specific ideas not only about what to teach the Indian children but how to teach them. Reading was to be taught by the phonetic system. Skilled teachers should teach music, dance, painting, sculpture, engraving, printing, and mechanical arts. Agricultural courses were necessary, but horticultural courses focused on flowers and fruits, would also satisfy their need for beauty. Good tailors and seamstresses would be needed to introduce dressmaking and clothing production. Manikins were to be utilized to teach human "anatomy and the laws of health." Celestial and terrestrial sciences, history, geography, mapmaking, and philosophy were all equally important.

Beeson believed that all instruction on the reservation would be wasted if the right teachers were not chosen for the task. According to Beeson, finding the best "pure minded persons of both sexes," required phrenological readings of each applicant.

He thought that housing on the reservation should be "cheap but affordable" dwellings with rose bushes and various flowers and shrubbery surrounding each one. Indians could wean themselves from chasing their food once the roots and fruits were cultivated and ready to be harvested close to home. Rather than using the reservation as a form of punishment, John Beeson outlined his wish list and explored possibilities that would integrate Natives into the ever-changing future.

It is doubtful that any other letter

that came into Palmer's office had such a far-reaching and paternalistic vision for the ancient tribes. However, the letter was likely unanswered as shortly after it was received, Palmer himself was ousted by the governor and the people of Oregon. Palmer was also considered too protective of the Indians and was suspected of being a part of an unacceptable fringe political group.

A year later, while living in New York, Beeson published the first edition of *A Plea for the Indians* which chronicles his journey from Oregon and his own observations about the Indian wars. One wonders today how things might have been different if even a fraction of the ideas expressed in his letter had been implemented.

All quotes are from: Letter: John Beeson to Joel Palmer, 22 June 1856. University of Oregon, Knight Library, Special Collections AX57 Bx2 F2.



John Beeson's *A Plea for the Indians* developed themes set down in his June 1856 letter to Superintendent Palmer. Written one year later, the 143-page treatise is described by Oregon Historian William L. Lang as "arguably the most eloquent defense of Oregon Indians published in the nineteenth century"

University of Minnesota Library

“WHAT’S IN A NAME?”

Today, we have familiar names for most of the streams and mountains of the Rogue River Valley: for example, Bear Creek, Mount Ashland, Pilot Rock, and so forth. So did our Native predecessors, but, of course, those were very different names. And most of the Natives’ place names have become lost to us.

Fortunately, Molly Orton, an Upland Takelma elder who’d been a young girl when her people still lived near the Table Rocks, remembered some of them – as told to her by her father. In the early 1930s, anthropologist John Peabody Harrington brought Molly Orton down from the Grand Ronde Reservation -- back to her original homeland. They toured the area by automobile and Molly told Harrington the geographic place names that she could recall. Unfortunately, the meaning of many of those ancient names was not given. Nevertheless, here are a few of them -- it is a precious legacy:

Rogue River: “Dagelam” (simply means “the river”).

Agate Desert/White City area: “Sa’th-kawkh” (meaning unknown, but this vicinity was very important because of its dense patches of edible roots and bulbs).

Roxy Ann Butte: “Alwiya” (meaning unknown).

Bear Creek: “Si-ku-ptat” (means “dirty water,” almost certainly for the turbidity caused by the volcanic-clay soils found on the northeast side of the Bear Creek Valley).

Grizzly Peak: “Lath’kawkh” (means “front of person”; this major mountain faces the Ashland area, dominates the skyline to the northeast of Bear Creek).

Mt. Ashland/Wagner Butte:



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HANLEY FARM ANNUAL HERITAGE PLANT SALE

Saturday April 28-29

10am-3pm

[SOHS Members Only: Sat. 9-10am]

The annual Heritage Plant Sales features over 50 varieties of heritage plants from flowering quince to purple lilacs. Iris, peonies, old roses, daylilies, hellebores, herbs and more will be on sale.



Visit a Shakespeare Garden and faerie gardens. Take a wagon ride, and enjoy lunch refreshments and more. Raffle: Your own Shakespeare Garden!

**For additional information go to
www.sohs.org**

Hanley Farm, 1053 Hanley Road, Central Point, OR

“Alke-takh” (meaning unknown, but it refers to the snowy mountains “beyond/behind” Ashland; Molly Orton specified that Alke-takh was visible from Table Rock; people gathered beargrass [for basket-weaving] from its southwestern slopes).

Pilot Rock: “Tan-ts’atseniphtha” (meaning “stone stand up”).

Jackson Hot Springs: “Ta’kaw” (means “poison lake”; originally, the

thermal springs formed a wide pond close to Bear Creek, later, when Pacific Highway was built, much of its water was drained with ditches; the term “poison” may have indicated that the place was considered to be spiritually powerful [and, hence, potentially dangerous]).

Timber Mountain: “Usiyuwot” (means “rawhide bucket”; rising west of Jacksonville, it is visible from Table Rocks).



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

Today more than ever, the vitality of the Southern Oregon Historical Society is a product of community partnerships. In recent years the society has begun or considered an impressive number of joint ventures with the community.

Particularly exciting is the new cooperative arrangement with Jackson County Library Services. This arrangement, that goes into effect March 13, allows our outstanding Research Library to be accessible to Jackson County residents at no cost five days a week. This agreement builds upon the partnership between SOHS and the Jackson County Library Services that has produced the monthly Windows in Time history talks, offered free of charge at Medford and Ashland Public Libraries for the past ten years.

In 2018, an expanded contract with Family Nurturing Center (FNC) ensures that Hanley Farm will continue with agricultural production for the next several years. We are so proud to be a part of FNC's work helping families recover from addiction. The farm also hosts Central Point Community Gardens. Using Hanley's rich soil, the City of Central Point provides low-cost garden plots to residents who otherwise would not have the opportunity to grow their own vegetables and flowers.

Our partnership with Jefferson Public Radio (JPR) continues. In the past 13 years, JPR has run more than 3000 episodes of *As It Was*, historic vignettes written and produced by SOHS volunteers.. Select episodes are published weekly in the Ashland Daily Tidings.

We partner closely with our schools. Crater High School puts on the play for our annual Haunted Field Walk. This year thirty elementary school classes will participate in Children's Heritage Fair and another ten will take part in Children's Harvest Fair. Major archaeological work at Hanley Farm is done with the professional help of Southern Oregon University Lab of Anthropology (SOULA)

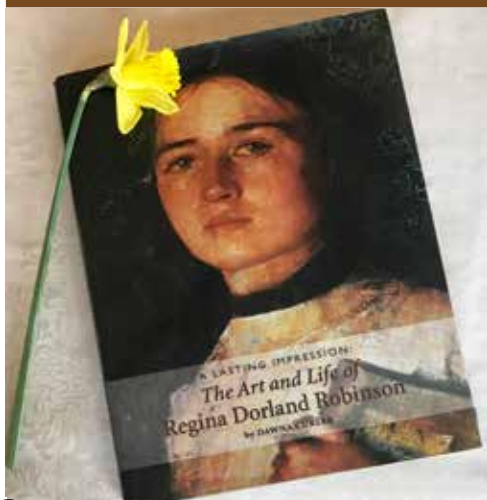
Numerous businesses, organizations and individuals regularly donate to projects and events of the society from Clouser Well drilling that installed a new water system at Hanley Farm, to Hillcrest Orchards that provides apples and pumpkins for our annual Scarecrow Festival. Special thanks to the Cascade Civil War Society Re-enactors for their participation in the Living History Days event..

With all these wonderful partnerships, what greater partnership does the Southern Oregon Historical Society have than with YOU, our members, our first and most important supporters! Thank you and please continue to be our partner. Help us expand upon our community partnering; encourage groups, businesses and individuals to join us. Be part of our annual Spring Membership Drive.

With Gratitude,

Doug McGeary, SOHS Board President

Spring Membership Drive



SOHS membership is a gift that keeps on giving. If you enroll an individual or a family, the gift of membership provides early announcements of events, reduced ticket prices, and an opportunity to meet others interested in our rich regional heritage.

As a spring bonus, new members who enroll by June 1 will receive a copy of Dawna Curler's beautiful coffee table book, *The Art and Life of Dorland Robinson*. Before her untimely death, this talented young painter indelibly captured the life and spirit of early 1900s Jacksonville.



MEMBERSHIP

Membership in Southern Oregon Historical Society entitles you to:

- The SOHS Quarterly Newsletter.
- Advanced notices of events and volunteer opportunities.
- Discounted Member Rates.
- Free admission to the SOHS Research Library
- A 10% discount on gift shop purchases at the Research Library and Hanley Farm

ENROLLING ON LINE IS EASY!

www.sohs.org/membership

OR ENROLL BY MAIL WITH THE FOLLOWING FORM:

- ☐ **Individual** - \$35.00: All of the above benefits for one person
- ☐ **Family** - \$50.00: All of the above benefits for one family
- ☐ **Business** - \$75.00: Free Library access for all employees for business-related projects, plus up to 5 free scans of SOHS photographs (a \$75.00 value)
- ☐ **Patron** - \$100.00: All of the above benefits and 10% off Hanley Farm rentals
- ☐ **Curator** - \$250.00
- All of the benefits at the Patron level plus private tour of the Research Library
- ☐ **Director** - \$500.00: All of the benefits of a Curator membership plus guest privileges for six additional people
- ☐ **Historian's Circle** - \$1,000.00: All of the benefits of a Director membership plus a private tour of the collection
- ☐ **Lifetime** - \$3,000.00: All of the benefits of the Historian's Circle membership plus one free rental at Hanley Farm

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Mail Membership Form with check made out to SOHS or with credit card information to:

Southern Oregon Historical Society, 106 N. Central Avenue, Medford, OR 97501



SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBERS

BEN TRUWE: BRINGING OLD NEWS CLIPS BACK TO LIFE



SOHS volunteer Ben Truwe at the telecine, The transfer system allows SOHS to digitally preserve and archive invaluable 16-millimeter films.

From the 1960s through the early 1980s local Medford TV stations KOB1 and KTLV shot their news stories on 16-millimeter film. Over ten years ago, the stations donated their thousands of old film clips to the SOHS library archives where they were stored away, waiting for a new purpose in life. Years passed, and the film waited patiently in its cans in the SOHS archive, carefully cataloged but unseen.

A grant from the Jackson County Cultural Coalition made all the difference. In 2015 the Coalition provided SOHS the means to purchase a solid state camera that would convert the images to a video signal so they could be loaded onto a computer and brought back to life. So far, Ben Truwe has transferred over a thousand news clips, and has only gotten to the year 1967.

The solid-state camera is not much bigger than a large match box, compared to the old RCA telecine that projects the film. The telecine is about six feet tall and three feet wide, and the camera is attached to it like a tiny mechanism in a grandfather clock. Each film clip only takes an average of two minutes to transfer, but cleaning, splicing and cataloging can easily add another ten minutes.

Each film is a mystery. The film clips are stored in canisters that haven't been opened for 50 years. No one

knows what is in them. There are dates, but no titles on many canisters; the contents are not identified, and there is no sound track on the earlier films.

Not only does Truwe transfer the news clips onto a computer, but also tries to identify who is in them! There are five easy steps to the transfer process: 1) Taking the film out of the can, 2) threading and splicing, 3) winding the film onto a reel, 4) wiping off the dust, and 5) threading the film onto the telecine machine. He then writes a description based on what appears on the screen as the film scrolls through the projector.

Two recent clips dated July 7, 1967 depict the demolition of the Phipps Auto Court in Medford and a strike of airline workers at Medford Airport. One mysterious news clip from 1965 depicts a group of people surrounded by hundreds of coconut shells. A notation on the film can says "Free Coconut Meat." How's that for a mystery? Does anyone know what that was all about?

Truwe would welcome any volunteers who would like to help complete the project. He says that anyone who can operate a sewing machine or drive a stick shift can learn to do it. He adds, "We also need longtime residents to just watch the films and identify the people in them. I'd really like to know why local people were shucking coconuts in the Sixties for fun."

Sharon Bywater



Windows In Time

Windows in Time talks are offered to the public free of charge at the Medford Library and Ashland Library on 1st and 2nd Wednesdays from noon to 1pm.

April 4 & 11 — *Goldmines to Woodland Trails: Protecting Historic Jacksonville's Natural Heritage* — Larry Smith

May 2 & 9 — *The Civil War (With its*

Effects) Comes to Southern Oregon — Paul Christy

June 6 & 13 — *Lost Beneath the Waters: Lost Creek Lake Villages* — Dennis Ellingson

July 11 (Ashland) & 18 (Medford) — *State of Jefferson 1920s Auto Tour* — Todd Kepple

August 1 & 8 — *NewsWatch 5: Rogue Valley TV News from 1965* — Ben Truwe

September 5 & 12 — *Stories of Southern Oregon: Landscape Changed* — Maureen Battistella

For the full year-long schedule go to our website at sohs.org

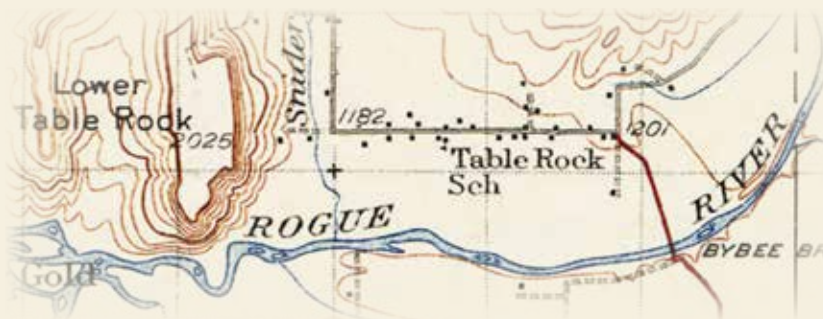


Table Rock Chronicles, 1901: Harry's Appendicitis

On the north side of the Rogue River between Upper and Lower Table Rock, some 15 families farmed a township known as Table Rock. In 1901 these farms with their fertile bottom lands were still remarkably isolated. Children were born and grew up in homes that had no running water electricity or telephones. Horses were ridden to school, and medical help was a half-day away. This is the setting for Mary Nealon's account of what transpired the winter when her 20-year-old brother Harry came down with appendicitis.

Once my older brother Harry came home from a trip to town feeling very ill. He had gone to sell a load of wood and had eaten sardines for lunch. They apparently hadn't agreed with him. Mother gave him a dose of podophyllum, a bitter cathartic... thinking this would cure him. The next morning he was worse instead of better... so father decided to take him... into Medford to see Dr. Wait, who pronounced his trouble as appendicitis and said he would have to stay in town. There was no hospital in Medford so Father took to the home of George Jackson, an old family friend.

Dr. Waite called in Dr. Pickel, who said Harry must be operated on at once, as his appendix had burst. Harry positively refused and Father would not have it done against his will—so Harry was kept in bed at



Sheep grazing below Table Rock

SOHS #33338

Mr. Jackson's home from more than a month. Father stayed with him and... that left 18-year-old brother Emmett to keep the place going and as he was carrying the mail three times a week, a lot of work fell upon us [four] girls: getting in the wood for the stove and fireplace, feeding the fattening hens, and milking the cows.

It was fun for me, as I liked the outside work—until the snow came; then we really had it rough. The poor hogs had no shelter and the corn we threw would sink into the snow. Wheeling in the wood was hard work with an old

wheelbarrow slipping in the snow....

Father set to worrying about the wood and came home driving Nellie, to see how we were faring. He got Emmett to cut down a big oak tree from the yards. This made my mother think all the wood they had burned when clearing the land when they first settled there. They would set fire to it and burn it in the fields.

When Father came home that time he told us we couldn't expect any Santa Claus. Harry wouldn't be able to leave the Jackson home and Father, of course, would stay with him there. I couldn't see why Santa Claus wouldn't come anyway, as I still had faith in the old man with the whiskers. We didn't hang up our stockings that year, but when I saw how white Mae's face became and she wondered about telling Mother. I can see Mother now sitting by the fireplace with little Katherine on her lap. I think she was told and grandmother also. When Christmas came there was a box of cookies for my 16-year-old brother John. I thought Santa did remember until Mae said, "It was so nice of Mrs. Pendleton to think of Johnny."

It was my classmate/schoolmate Verne Pendleton who came down to tell us that his father had been to Medford and said that Harry had had a relapse. As there were no telephones in those days, and with mail only three times a week, we were dependent on neighbors who went to town to bring us information.

We were out in the smokehouse when Verne came and Mae was cutting into a big ham. I wondered what a relapse was, and knew it wasn't good when I saw how white Mae's face became and she wondered about telling Mother. I can see Mother now sitting by the fireplace with little Katherine on her lap. I think she was told and Grandmother also.

Emmett was still going to school but he had to miss the days that he



The Nealon Sisters in the school dresses taken about the time of the story. , Left to right: Rose, age 9; Margaret, age 14; Mae, age 15; Mary, age 10, who later wrote the story of "Harry's Appendicitis" All the sisters but Mary worked as elementary school teachers. Mary preferred farm life, married and mothered. 5 children.

SOHS #20153

carried the mail to Sam's Valley. The snow was so deep that it was hard on him, and our Jess floundered through it with him and the mailbags on her back.

Finally, the snow melted. The worst part of the winter was over. Harry survived the relapse and was able to come home although he looked like a ghost, and it was months before he was well. With Father and Harry home, we went back to live our normal lives. The spring brought more sunshine, baby lambs, baby chicks, calves, and pussy willows bursting out down by the old mudhole.

This story is taken from Family Stories from *The Nealons of Table Rock*, compiled and written in 1973 by Katherine Nealon Huntress Leavitt. The delightful account of Jackson County farm life in the early 1900s was republished in 2017 and is available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



Above: Bringing in the hay crop in the Table Rock area circa, 1900 (Gold Hill Historical Society photo) . Below: A summertime fishing picnic along the Rogue River in this same period. (SOHS #11863)



*Spring bursting into life at Hanley Farm
Pasm Sasseen Photo.*

CURRENT RESIDENT OR



From the SOHS Research Library

ACCESSING THE ARCHIVES

By Pat Harper

SOHS staff and volunteers who love historical research also love to share their discoveries. Whether the SOHS Library volunteers are answering a question, writing for this quarterly, or creating an *As It Was* story to be shared on Jefferson Public Radio, their reward is in revealing forgotten facts.

SOHS's new contract with Jackson County Library District is based on enhancing access to the SOHS Archives by increasing the hours to Noon to 4, Tuesday through Saturday, and waiving use fees for Jackson County residents. This exciting development

includes improving website access to SOHS materials.

In 1981, the Society began the *Table Rock Sentinel*. Over the years the magazine went from black and white to col-



(Right) Library Volunteers Hazel Smith and Jennifer Laughlin research to find answers to patron questions.

or, and from monthly to quarterly. It changed its name several times, even trying just "*Oregon Heritage*" briefly in 1994, before it became *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*. All the issues are now available online at <http://sohs.org/magazines-all>. The index to the magazines includes links to the correct issue for each entry.

Many articles are based on research and artifacts in the SOHS collection. Others are the result of interviews with people such as Eugene Bennett, prominent Jacksonville resident and artist.

Over time, SOHS will add thousands more scanned photos and full text documents to its website, too. Thanks to the JCLD and SOHS Boards for their support!