

THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY/ OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIP

By Larry Mullaly

The Southern Oregon Historical Society began with a flourish of enthusiasm, suffered the typical teething problems of most new organizations, and in the 1950s emerged with one of the largest museum facilities in the state – and a growing collection of artifacts.

The role of the Oregon Historical Society in the early development of this organization is an important but relatively underappreciated part of this story.

The prelude to these developments was the product of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), a non-political fraternity developed to promote patriotism and an appreciation of history. In the spring of 1945, Medford mayor Clarence Meeker, a member of Sons of the Revolution (SAR), organized a June 18th dinner at the Jacksonville Courthouse focusing on the need for a regional history museum preferably located in the restored Courthouse. Helping him were other SAR members, Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Southern Oregon Pioneer Society. Attendees included Earl Snell, the governor of Oregon, mayors of Jacksonville and Medford, the editors of the Medford *Mail Tribune* and Grants Pass *Courier*, Jackson County Court officials, and more than 100 guests.

*Historic Jackson County Courthouse @ 1885.
Photo Source: SOHS #863.*



When the Sons of the American Revolution gathered the following February for their annual meeting, Meeker renewed his pitch for a museum. His appeal was buttressed by two guests from Portland: recently elected Oregon Historical Society (OHS) president Omar C. Spencer, and OHS Superintendent and *Oregon Historical Quarterly* editor, Lancaster Pollard. Both men endorsed the idea of a museum which they felt could be achieved by creating a regional branch chapter of the Oregon Historical Society.

The OHS at this time was engaged in an energetic outreach effort to bolster its membership that in recent years had fallen as low as 200. For much of its history OHS had catered (as its official minutes would later acknowledge) “largely to scholars of historical research,” but it was now making contacts with local history groups, (PARTNERSHIP, continued on page 2)

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enlisting them as associate societies. Southern Oregon was particularly promising in this regard.

Foundations had been well laid. Two weeks prior to the February 22, 1946, meeting which Spencer and Pollard attended, a “First Membership List of the Southern Oregon Historical Society” already existed listing officers and board members of the future organization. The first two members listed were Lancaster Pollard and Clarence Meeker. Other names were strategically chosen and included Mrs. G.Q. [Marie] D’Albini from the Medford Daughters of the American Revolution, Claire Hanley of the Pioneer Society, and other members drawn from the Sons of the American Revolution and the Pioneer Society. At the SAR meeting that night, the chapter endorsed an invitation from Spencer and Pollard, on behalf of OHS, asking interested individuals to gather in Mayor Meeker’s Medford office on February 27, “to establish a branch chapter of the Oregon Historical Society.”

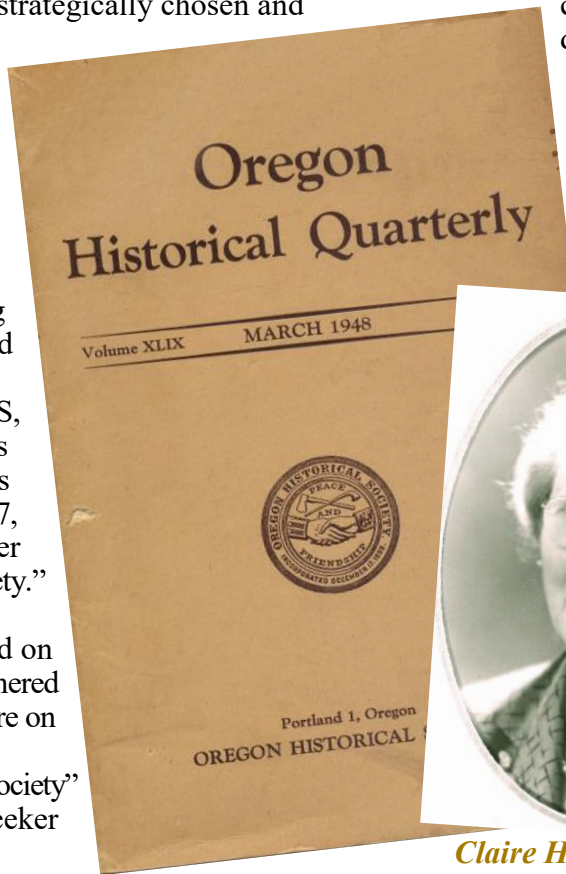
Nine days later, those named on the First Membership List gathered in Meeker’s office. It was there on February 27, 1946, that the “Southern Oregon Historical Society” was born, with Clarence Meeker chosen as its first president.

The group immediately set about organizing a tax measure for a new museum, but the effort was short-lived. At its May 1946 meeting, Medford City Attorney Frank P. Farrell informed those present that such a vote required prior authorization from the state legislature. Meeker was then instructed by the SOHS directors to work with Farrell and draft such a measure to be passed on to the Oregon Historical Society for legal review and approval. The product of this effort was introduced in a bill in the Senate and House in March by three Southern Oregon legislators. It stipulated that any society in the state that sought to create a county history fund had to be “affiliated with and approved by the Oregon Historical Society.”

SOHS was now viewed by its members as one of five local Oregon history groups affiliated with the state historical society. A March 7, 1948, Southern Oregon History Society press release prepared for the Medford ***Mail Tribune*** referred to the committee as the “Southern Oregon chapter” of the Oregon Historical Society. At a SOHS board meeting two days later, Pollard was once again present and spoke of “the accomplishments that he hoped could be realized by the [Oregon Historical] Society in this area.”

To encourage donations of historical items from the community, however, draft incorporation papers downplayed this relationship. “It is understood and agreed that all material and property collected and owned by this corporation shall be held in Jacksonville, Oregon by it in perpetual trust for the people of Southern Oregon; but its control of the same shall be at all times maintained and shall never be taken away.” Although no mention was

made of the state organization (the document does not appear to have been filed with the state), the society remained linked to OHS. Even simple matters such as how to assess dues on out-of-state members were routinely referred to Pollard for advice. Following Clarence Meeker’s unexpected death on February 24, 1948, board members voted “to incorporate at once as part of the Oregon Historical Association.”



Claire Hanley

Photo Source: SOHS #05498

With enabling legislation now in the books, the SOHS group announced on March 20th of that year that “a small tax would be put on the ballot of the upcoming election for the purpose of transforming the former county courthouse at Jacksonville into a southern Oregon museum.” Although the levy was voted into law in November 1948, (it passed by a several hundred vote margin out of some 13,000 votes cast), no regular meeting was held until May 10th of the following year. At that meeting Pollard, spoke to the trustees of “the law and the legal aspect of the SOHS and the value of history as an asset to the community.”

Not everyone, however, was pleased with the OHS relationship. At the May 10, 1949, meeting, chaired for the first time by newly elected president Claire Hanley, long-time board member Judge J.B. Coleman expressed his distaste for affiliating “with any up-state organization.” Pollard replied by citing the good things the relationship had produced and considered it a model relationship. He also promised that when the “new museum is ready,” a number of artifacts, held by the Oregon Historical Society, would be turned over to the Southern Oregon Society. At the end of meeting, the board approved a resolution “that the Society extend appreciation and thanks to Mr. Lancaster Pollard for his presence at the meeting and for his assistance in matters pertaining to the establishment of the Society and the incorporation of the Society.”

Concerns, however, persisted. At the June 1949 meeting, board secretary Venita Daley introduced a resolution that quickly passed, asking for clarifications regarding “the legality of the position of the Southern Oregon Historical Society Inc.’s affiliation financially, socially, and obligatory with the State Historical Society.” The result was an updated version of the Articles of Incorporation that made only a cursory reference to the state organization. “The object...of this corporation...,” it affirmed “is to encourage and develop the study of... history... in affiliation with state and local historical societies.” But the document also stipulated “that all material and property collected and owned by this corporation shall be held in Jacksonville, Oregon...in perpetual trust for the people of Southern Oregon....”

Little changed, however, in the working relationship of the two organizations. At virtually the same time the Articles of Incorporation were submitted to the state, Pollard was promoting a shared fee arrangement whereby,

in return for an even split of the \$2.00 membership fee, SOHS members would be enrolled in OHS as affiliate members and be entitled to receive copies of its flagship publication the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*. On June 21, 1949, the board unanimously agreed to split the \$2.00 membership dues fee with OHS. A check for \$50 was immediately drafted with the understanding that all of SOHS’s 50 members would receive the June 1949 issue of the *Quarterly*. About this same time OHS offered financial assistance to help the Southern Oregon society

repair the historic Beekman Bank building in Jacksonville.

For the next several years, ties between the two organizations remained close. Beginning in 1950 SOHS sent a delegate to the annual meeting, and the Society President, Claire Hanley, served two terms on the OHS governing board. When a professional curator was needed to organize the new Jacksonville museum in 1950, Pollard deputized his museum director to serve in this capacity for three months in exchange for a nominal salary of \$250 a month and travel expenses.

The following year SOHS sent a panel of speakers to Pollard’s annual history symposium to deliver a presentation on promoting

county historical districts. In 1953 SOHS petitioned members of the Southern Oregon delegation to endorse a \$65,000 request for the biennium to support “the valuable work in the collection of Oregon historical material and data.” As promised, significant Southern Oregon artifacts were delivered. Although OHS was precluded by law from giving them away, they offered them on a “permanent loan” basis.

In April 1954, Lancaster Pollard resigned his leadership role to devote his time to teaching and research. Two years later, when the OHS membership fee was raised a

(**PARTNERSHIP**, continued on page 4)



SOHS President, Claire Hanley; Fred Meamber, President, Siskiyou County Museum; and Hal Ogle, President, Klamath County Museum; at Jacksonville Museum opening, 1950.
Photo Source: SOHS #9742.

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dollar, the SOHS board declined to increase its dues but made it optional for its members to pay extra to retain their affiliate relationship with the state organization. In subsequent years, both organizations grew exponentially, and collaborative efforts largely ceased. But what had been accomplished between 1945 and 1955 was groundbreaking for both organizations.

In the early 1950s, many new county-based historical societies came into existence taking advantage of the SOHS/OHS county history fund legislation passed in 1947. The relationship between county or local history organizations was also clarified in OHS policy describing the affiliate membership. "The special intent of the state society," the OHS document affirms, "is to assist wherever feasible the permanent development of specialized museums faithfully reflecting the varied and dramatic scenes and traditions comprising the great Oregon scene.... Each keeps its autonomy and manages its own affairs." As late as 1972, SOHS continued to be listed as an affiliated society of the Oregon Historical Society.

Although continuing tax levies were later rolled into county tax bases, the founding of the Southern Oregon Historical Society played a key role in establishing a basis for government support of local societies. It gave rise to the many historical societies that now share and preserve local and regional history, making a dramatic impact not only on southern Oregon, but across the entire state.

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[Note: Lancaster Pollard was also the first "superintendent" of the Washington State Historical Society, responsible for its library, museum, and collections.]



A MESSAGE from the PRESIDENT

"A 75th Anniversary Celebration!"

Seventy-five years of the Southern Oregon Historical Society, our Diamond Jubilee! It is a time to pause, step back, and reflect on who we are.



SOHS began with an intense conviction that if something was not done, the history of the Rogue Valley would be lost. Our founders viewed the past in very personal terms: the stories of pioneer fathers and mothers and their priceless keepsakes; wedding dresses, music boxes, tools, and children's toys.

With the help of our community, the Society has preserved this heritage. Our archives became a haven for priceless letters and diaries, the crumbling copies of old newspapers, heirloom photographs, and early newsreels. We have rescued, organized and made available civic and commercial records, and the journals of no-longer-active fraternal and cultural organizations.

Each generation of the Society has brought fresh perspectives to our sense of regional heritage. In the 1960s the Society was instrumental in preserving early Jacksonville buildings. Today we celebrate the lives and contributions of Native Americans, Chinese, Blacks and Latinos and the cultures of all people who live or have lived in southern Oregon.

For 75 years we have been good partners with the southern Oregon community. We have participated in its parades, staged exhibits in malls and public buildings, and aided reporters and newscasters in telling their stories. We have made the record of the past available to whoever comes to us, and by the wonders of the internet, made these records searchable by anyone in the world.

Together, we have kept history alive. Within two and a half years of the opening of the Jacksonville Museum in 1950, 100,000 visitors had passed through its halls. By the 1980s the society was publishing a professionally produced history magazine, and thousands of children were taking part in Children's Heritage Days in Jacksonville and at SOHS Hanley Farm. Volunteer writers, tapping the resources of our collections, prepared over 5000 separate radio vignettes, and researchers have given over 250 original history presentations in our public libraries. Today we maintain a year-round program of popular history-related events for persons of all ages.

For 75 years, with the support of our community, we have honored our roots, our values, and our stories. Together, with you, we look to new and exciting horizons before us.

- Doug McGeary

Congratulations on your 75th anniversary, SOHS—and there's still so much more history to discover! One of our favorite Restore Oregon events was our Heritage Barns Workshop at Hanley Farm. Such a treasure!

Peggy Moretti
Executive Director
Restore Oregon

Oregon Community Foundation congratulates the Southern Oregon Historical Society on 75 years of making, preserving, and sharing the rich history of Southern Oregon! SOHS's one million artifacts, thousands of photos and records, and the historic Hanley Farm hold the stories of the people who have made this region the special place that it is today. OCF shares your commitment to celebrating community and to more inclusive storytelling. We are proud to support your work and wish you the best in the next 75 years.

Amy Cuddy,
Southern Oregon
Regional Director
Oregon Community
Foundation

The Oregon Heritage Commission would like to congratulate the Southern Oregon Historical Society on this notable milestone. The Southern Oregon Historical Society has collected, preserved and shared the history of southern Oregon. Their efforts to preserve the collections through many challenges over the years is commendable. We look forward to their continued work to include more stories and perspectives of the area.

Chelsea Rose
Chair
Oregon Heritage Commission

From J.C. PENNEY'S to SOHS HISTORY CENTER

A Hallmark in Medford's Progress!

By George Kramer

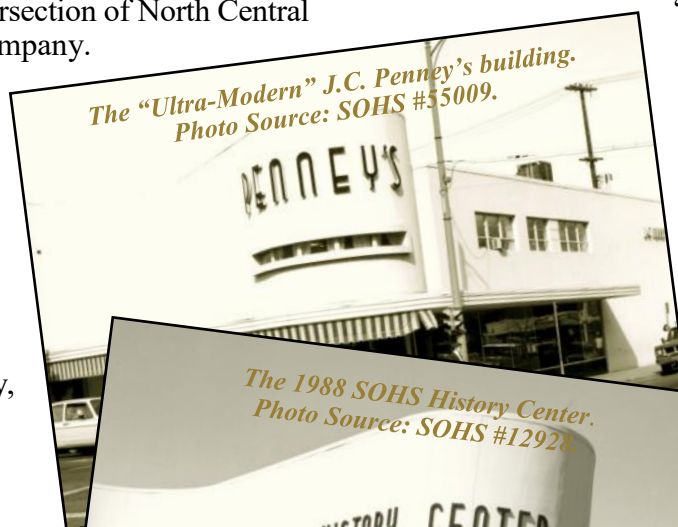
In the 1930s downtown Medford was the focal point for clothes shopping in the Rogue Valley. Within a few blocks were the locally-owned Barker's Men's Store, the Toggery, Mode O'Day and Mann's Department Store. The M&M Department Store shared the intersection of North Central and 6th with the J.C. Penney Company.

Penney's, established in Kemmerer, Wyoming by James Cash Penney and two partners in 1902, was first known as "The Golden Rule." Penney's grew quickly, opening stores in towns throughout the west. Penney bought out his partners and in 1913 the company, renamed J. C. Penney Stores, moved its headquarters to New York City and was listed on the New York Stock Exchange. By 1929 Penney's operated 1392 stores, nationwide. There was a Penney's in almost any town of size. Ashland had a Penney store and so did Grants Pass.

Medford's Penney's opened in 1927, when the company purchased 52 Golden Rule stores in the Pacific Northwest, including Medford's. Penney's quickly remodeled the Golden Rule building at North Central and Sixth streets, to reflect "the standard front" cream and green ceramic tiles used by all Penney stores.

As World War Two ended, and Medford and Jackson County population soared in the post-war period, J. C. Penney looked to upgrade its store to serve the growing community. Downtown was still the shopping center of the region and Penney's purchased the building directly north, at the N.E. corner of North Central and Sixth. The Groceteria, a long-time local market moved across to the west, into the former Johnson's (now the Southern Oregon Educational Services District). In 1947, Penney's razed the market and announced plans for a spectacular new building. The new store of the latest design, was characterized by

the *Medford Mail Tribune* as the "California-style." Today we'd call it "Streamline Moderne," a style characterized by smooth stucco walls, graceful curves and modern materials.



The "Ultra-Modern" J.C. Penney's building.
Photo Source: SOHS #55009.



The 1988 SOHS History Center.
Photo Source: SOHS #12928.

"The new ultra-modern store almost three times larger than the old Penney business establishment across the street.... It is considered by Penney officials as the most modernistic in design and arrangement of the company's stores in Oregon."

The designer of the new Penney's is unknown but was probably a California architect hired by the corporation to develop a "model" store. The Donald M. Drake Company, of Portland, was hired to construct the project and work started in October 1947.

The Grand Opening was held Thursday August 5, 1948. The *Mail Tribune* touted its features. "[The] new building is completely modern inside and out, with everything new and designed for the

convenience of shoppers.... Florescent lighting illuminates the store. A pneumatic tube system will speed change and receipts to customers."

The opening of the modernistic Penney's was a hallmark in Medford's post-war progress and downtown remained a bustling hub of business activity throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s. People from all over the region would drive to Medford to shop and the huge Penney's was certainly a major destination for back-to-school or professional clothes. Purchases could be made via Lay-Away, upstairs, as customers made regular payments until the item was paid. Santa would appear in December, either in large front windows or the top of the wide,

grand staircase to the mezzanine, and help mom and dad get “More Toys for Your Money!”

When the Medford viaduct was completed in 1972, Riverside and Central, through downtown, lost much of their traffic. The Interstate routes north and south of the valley were completely opened in 1966. With better transportation access, local shopping patterns changed. “Back-To-School” shopping meant an opportunity to visit the Valley River Mall in Eugene, or to head off to Portland or San Francisco for the weekend.

Downtown shopping faced even greater competition in 1986 when the Rogue Valley Mall opened. Penney’s closed its downtown location and became one of the “anchor” stores in the new mall, leaving its modernistic building vacant, its future uncertain.

About that same time SOHS, with offices and shops scattered over a handful of small houses, was looking to build a new museum and consolidate its operation. Plans

for a large facility in Jacksonville hit a snag and the idea of buying the vacant J. C. Penney’s building created a chance to locate in Medford. Penney’s provided some support, and the Society purchased the building. We-Group Architects, of Eugene, designed the remodel and SOHS opened in 1988. Renamed “The History Center,” the lettering on the corner was modeled after the Penney Design and WeGroup won an award for their sensitive design.



*Women on stairs of J.C. Penney building @ 1958.
Photo Source: SOHS #14228.*

The “ultra-modern” design of Medford’s J.C. Penney building never caught on and there is no known example of the company ever building another in that style. Maybe it was too expensive? Maybe it was just too modern? But for thousands of southern Oregon families, it was “the” place to shop in downtown for four decades.

George Kramer, of Ashland, is a historian of sorts with a special interest in old buildings. He remembers buying a sports coat at Medford’s “Jacques Penné” and is pleased to have been able to save the huge black and yellow steel “P” from the rotunda from going to the smelter.

For a 75-year-old, SOHS is looking great! And we’re inviting you to join us in celebrating this milestone all year long. Here are a just a few of the upcoming events, so mark your calendars and save the dates!

**Saturday, August 14
4pm to 7pm**

**An Old-Fashioned
Community BBQ
at
Pear Blossom Park**

Live music, face painting and SOHS’s 1946 Amphibious Fire Engine for the kids (and the young at heart) to climb on and operate the siren.

**Saturday, August 21
1pm to 3 pm**

**Family Concert &
Ice Cream Social
at
SOHS’s Hanley Farm**

Music by Bob O’Looney’s One-Man Band plus face painting and SOHS’s 1946 Amphibious Fire Engine for kids and adults to climb on and explore.

**Saturday, September 11
6pm**

**A 75th Anniversary
Celebration Dinner
at
Edenvale Winery and Vineyard**

Join Kingsley Kelley of KOB-TV as he tries to focus an irreverent panel of historian George Kramer, journalist Terri Martin, and JPR’s Geoffrey Riley on various history topics.

A LITTLE MUSEUM HISTORY...

by Carolyn Kingsnorth

Long before the Southern Oregon Historical Society dreamed of creating a museum in the historic Jackson County Courthouse, Jacksonville boasted a series of history museums that served as local, even regional, tourist attractions.

Jacksonville's first museum was actually a saloon—the Table Rock Billiard Saloon. Originally a bakery, it morphed into a saloon after the demise of its neighbor, the notorious El Dorado Saloon, in the fire of 1874. The Table Rock brick building survived.

It's not known when Table Rock co-owner and saloonkeeper Herman von Helms began collecting fossils and oddities but soon after the Table Rock reopened as a saloon, the local newspaper invited “persons possessing curiosities and specimens” to “bring them in” where they would be placed in the “Cabinet of Curiosities for inspection.” In 1875, the saloon and “Cabinet” boasted a potato which weighed three pounds.

Helms' early newspaper advertisements would invite people to visit

his museum, then “stay for his fine lager.” By 1879 the *Roseburg Independent* reported that Helms' “Cabinet of Curiosities” included stalactites from the Oregon Caves; freaks of nature such as four-legged chickens and two-headed turkeys; a mastodon tusk found in the Applegate; the “head and horns of a greater ox than the world is now acquainted with measuring 18 inches across the smaller part of the skull”; hundreds of geological specimens and “petrifications”; a gold nugget valued at \$700; a large collection of Indian relics including a bow and arrow used by Modoc Captain Jack; curious coins; and more.

The newspaper declared the collection to be “the best in the state” with many specimens which require study on the part of the naturalist—many to

puzzle the historian—and a great deal for the geologist to ponder over.”

When the saloon closed in 1914, the Helms' “Cabinet of Curiosities” collection of artifacts was valued at \$50,000. It encompassed “every possible manner of relic...mutely telling pages in the early history of Jackson County.” Many of those relics became part of the core of the Southern Oregon Historical Society's initial collection.

Even before the Table Rock Saloon closed, the Southern Oregon Pioneer Society considered establishing a museum. At its September 1910 meeting, the Society considered a proposition for a museum of pioneer relics. Backed by the Native Daughters of Oregon, the proposal was “to build a log cabin similar to the first



one erected in Jacksonville in March 1852, and to furnish it with a fireplace and the primitive furniture and relics of pioneer days.” It was noted that there was “ample material in the pioneer homes of Rogue River Valley to make the museum a most interesting feature.”

For years residents lamented the closing of the Table Rock, primarily for the loss of its “Cabinet of Curiosities,” since Jacksonville never seemed to have a shortage of saloons. When Paramount Pictures released “The Covered Wagon” in 1923—the film industry’s first historical “Epic Big Screen Western”—it intensified local interest in “old pioneer days” since the silent movie depicted the settlement of Oregon. “The Covered Wagon” became one of the most popular and critically acclaimed films of the first half of the 1920s, and a Jacksonville museum became more than wishful thinking.

Inspired by the film and the upcoming Jacksonville reunion of the Pioneer Society of Southern Oregon, Mrs. Alice Applegate Sargent purchased the 1855 Brunner Building at the corner of Main and South Oregon streets with the goal of creating “a repository for pioneer relics.” The museum opened briefly for the Society’s annual meeting in October 1924, then had its formal opening

February 27, 1925. Open on Tuesdays and Fridays, local newspapers reported that it attracted so many visitors that Mrs. Sargent and her assistant were kept very busy!

Soon after it opened, the one-room Jacksonville museum in the Brunner Building, operated by the Native Daughters of Jacksonville, was deemed inadequate. More space was needed, and as early as 1928

and Saloon. The “Cabinet of Curiosities” from the old Table Rock Saloon was added to the collection along with other items from “historical minded folks.” Then local antique dealer Frank Zell stepped in. He had both a valuable collection of his own and an eye for history.

In the 1940s, when crowded exhibits in the Bella Union threatened to crash through the floor to the cellar below, Zell asked the City Council to move the museum to the U.S. Hotel—a goal embraced by local folk for over 10 years. The Council approved the move; the collection was transferred to the U.S. Hotel; and the hotel became, for a time, the Jacksonville Museum. Visitors sometimes contributed a quarter to the kitty, and Jacksonville, no longer the commercial and governmental hub of the region, acquired its first tourist attraction.

In 1947, Grace Moody Hamaker Nobel became the caretaker of the Jacksonville Museum. She had been a cook at Camp

White and “mothered” a lot of the young service boys. When the owner of the J’ville Tavern hired her, her “Camp Whitters” followed her to Jacksonville. But the museum was her dream job.

Grace took her museum duties seriously. She made a detailed study of the history of the region and learned the backgrounds of many of the artifacts on display. She listened to visitors recite their family trees and encouraged them to continue their research. She (**MUSEUM**, continued on page 19)



Artifacts on display in Jacksonville Museum in U.S. Hotel. Photo Source: SOHS #12137.

the Chamber of Commerce and City Council petitioned Jackson County for money to establish a museum in the U.S. Hotel on California Street. The County “took it under advisement.” Although the suggestion was sound enough, no one had any spare money lying around waiting to be spent on such non-essentials as a museum.

In the 1930s, “a treasure house of junk and a handful of historical artifacts” was set up in what is now Jacksonville’s Bella Union Restaurant

THE MANY LIVES of the JACKSONVILLE COURTHOUSE

By Sharon Bywater

From early curio cabinets located in Jacksonville saloons to “the Museum of Southern Oregon” housed in the U.S. Hotel, Jacksonville residents have been saving local artifacts since the early 1900s hoping to find a permanent place to exhibit them.

As early as 1945 *The Medford Mail Tribune* wrote about the possibility of housing a museum in Jacksonville’s old courthouse building.

Jacksonville, the original county seat of Jackson County, did not have a proper courthouse until 1884. Before that, court was held in churches, saloons, and local businesses and then in the crude two-story building originally constructed by the Warren Masonic Lodge in 1859 as a meeting hall. As early as 1871, this old “courthouse” building was derided by the *Democratic Times* as a “disgrace to the county.” The *Oregon Sentinel* soon echoed the sentiment, asking, “Is it not time that the county had a courthouse that would not be mistaken by a stranger for a barn?”

When builders finished construction of the foundation of the new courthouse building in 1883, Jacksonville declared a holiday for the laying of the cornerstone. A list of donations to be placed in the cornerstone was solemnly read aloud accompanied by much fanfare and singing. Included

were various coins, a medal commemorating the silver wedding of Victoria and Albert, two quarts of whiskey, and a set of false teeth.

The “new” Jacksonville courthouse, constructed on the site of the original, was finished in 1884, more than \$2,000 under its \$32,000 budget. The Italianate two-story brick building featured Corinthian columns, arched windows, and a tower. The 22-inch-thick walls initially housed a large courtroom and 10 rooms for judges, juries, and county officials.

The court held its first session on February 11, 1884, ironically the year the railroad bypassed Jacksonville and its prominence began to fade. Its first cases included theft of a horse and saddle, the sale of whiskey without a license, and a charge of riot. The last trial held there in 1927 was that of the notorious DeAutremont brothers who were charged with the murder of four railroad employees during a train robbery in the Siskiyou Mountains. That



year the county seat was moved to the growing city of Medford.

Helen Colvig Cook wrote in the *Medford Mail Tribune* in 1926:

The new generation sees nothing amazing or imposing in the stately, solid, old brick building, whose small offices are quaint reminders of times past. Each office boasts paneled wainscoting and a fireplace...Magnificent it may have seemed at the time it was built to those men who had attended court when his honor sat on a packing box, but it fails to impress the present generation and is inadequate for the growing needs of the thriving county.

No longer the center of county affairs, Jacksonville's stately courthouse was left without a major purpose. Over the years it served as a meeting place for the Boy Scouts and was leased by the Jacksonville Grange. Dances were often held there, and a stage was constructed for local theatricals. It was used during WWII for meetings of the Civil Air Defense. It even played a role in Hollywood westerns.

However, the Pioneer Society and other prominent citizens saw the courthouse as the realization of a long-held dream. For years, they had advocated for a museum and the courthouse seemed the ideal location. Alice Hanley, President of the Pioneer Society, had even collected period

furniture and artifacts, storing many of them at her home, "The Willows," now Hanley Farm. When the Southern Oregon Historical Society was formally established in 1946, a museum in the historic courthouse came one step closer to reality.

The idea of a historical museum was firmly in place; the next step was money to complete the job. It was 1948 before the State enacted legislation to make it a possibility and voters approved a tax levy that would provide the necessary funding.

In the interim, the vacant courthouse building fell into disrepair. It was vandalized by the local youth, who broke windows and were said to have "wreaked havoc of major proportions." Any cleanup effort also had to deal with the pigeons and bats that had occupied the courthouse tower for years. With the help of local professionals and volunteers the Jacksonville Courthouse Museum opened on August 5, 1950.

The dedication speech inaugurating the long-awaited museum was delivered by local attorney and former Jackson County Clerk, Gus Newbury, who had attended the original 1884 cornerstone ceremony. Having lived through much of Jackson County history, including as an attorney in the DeAutremont train robbery case, Newbury

(**COURTHOUSE**, continued on page 12)



*Panoramic View of
Jackson County Courthouse @1910.
Photo Source: John Barnum Collection.*

COURTHOUSE

(continued from page 11)

noted the importance of preserving “relics of times gone by ...for present and future generations.”

Alice Hanley did not live to see the museum she had so long championed, but her niece, Claire, was elected the third president of the Historical Society in 1949. She made sure that her aunt’s collection of pioneer artifacts and memorabilia was preserved in the courthouse museum. Claire’s sister Mary became the museum’s curator from 1955-1969 (The museum’s first curator, Myrtle Lee, served in that position until 1955).

The Jacksonville Courthouse Museum was a showcase for southern Oregon history for 60 years with a collection of artifacts that included letters and journals of early settlers, their tools, farming implements and clothing. The museum closed in 2010 for lack of funding and the old courthouse building was turned over to the city of Jacksonville in 2012.

Today the courthouse has become Jacksonville City Hall. The City has restored the building, retaining the original walls and high ceilings. Modern bathrooms have been installed, and an elevator now allows easier

access to what was the second-floor courtroom, now multi-purpose space that can host council and committee meetings, entertainment, parties, and events.

An exhibit of historical Jacksonville photos from the SOHS collection now lines the main downstairs corridor, and a downstairs room now used for committee meetings is still home to two large photos of Peter Britt’s garden. They were part of “Peter Britt: The Man Beyond the Camera,” one of the last major exhibits SOHS staged in its Jacksonville Museum.

Although the Courthouse Museum closed, the SOHS collection itself has continued to grow. It currently contains over a million artifacts from seven southern Oregon counties—the second largest artifact collection in the state. In addition to items detailing the lives of early settlers, it includes early Native American and Chinese artifacts and ranges in size from a tiny flea to early fire trucks, stagecoaches, and even buildings! It houses many paintings and thousands of historic photographs.

Some of these items are on display in the Beekman House and Bank in Jacksonville, at SOHS’s Hanley Farm, and in “pop up” exhibits around the Valley. Even more will find a home in rotating exhibits when the Society opens its new museum in the coming years.



What are the oldest items in the SOHS collection?

A pair of plant fiber sandals typical of those worn in southern Oregon and northern California by Native Americans who lived here in the pre-settlement era are believed to be several thousand years old. These are attributed to the Klamath people.

What is the smallest item in the SOHS collection?

A flea on a microscope slide that belonged to Emil Britt. The slide was prepared by 19th Century Kentucky microscopist Joseph Bourgogne whose mounts won numerous international medals and were prized by microscopists the world over.



What SOHS collection storybook “sprites” preceded Harry Potter’s Hogwarts house elves in popularity?

This stockinette Brownie doll is from *The Brownies* series of books that were highly popular from 1897 to the 1930s. Author Palmer Cox declared that Brownies, like fairies and goblins, delight in harmless pranks and helpful deeds.

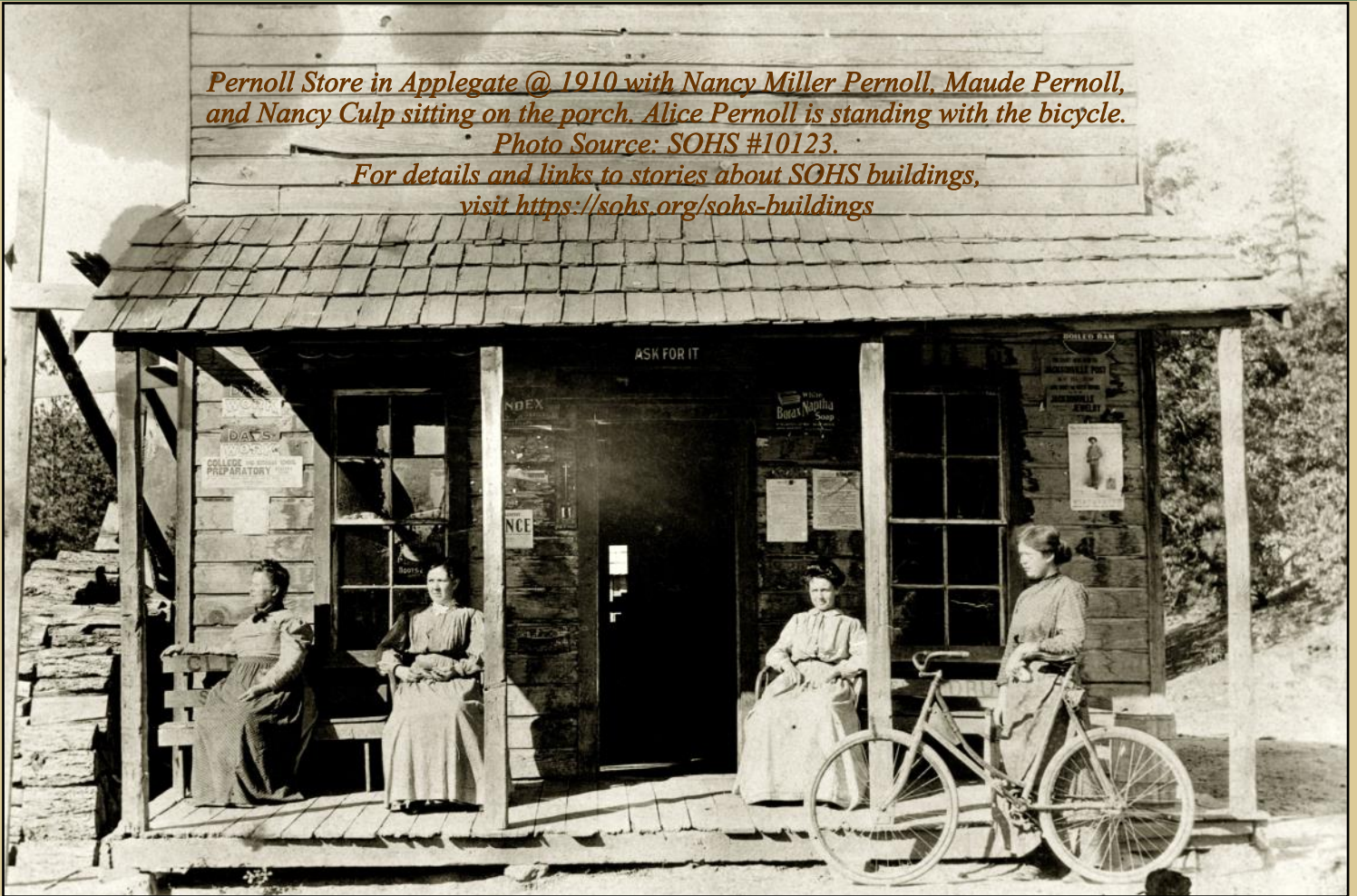


SOHS COLLECTION FUN FACTS!

Pernoll Store in Applegate @ 1910 with Nancy Miller Pernoll, Maude Pernoll, and Nancy Culp sitting on the porch. Alice Pernoll is standing with the bicycle.

Photo Source: SOHS #10123.

For details and links to stories about SOHS buildings, visit <https://sohs.org/sohs-buildings>



BUILDINGS SOHS HAS SAVED

From its inception, Southern Oregon Historical Society has been instrumental in saving 27 historical properties. The Society did not buy or own most of the buildings it managed, but many would have been demolished without SOHS's commitment to maintenance, restoration and use.

The original purpose of SOHS was to preserve the Jacksonville Courthouse and establish a museum in it. Soon the Society also became involved in efforts to save other buildings in Jacksonville—the Beekman House and Beekman Bank, the Catholic Rectory, and the U.S. Hotel—key elements in what became the town's National Historic Landmark District.

Mary Hanley donated the family homestead, Hanley Farm, to SOHS. And SOHS owns the History Center, formerly the J. C. Penney building in downtown Medford.

SOHS helped save the Swedenburg House in Ashland, an effort that involved years of dedicated work opposing Southern Oregon State College's (now SOU) efforts to

demolish it. For 15 years, its future was in doubt. In 1983 SOHS pledged \$100,000 for a 25-year-lease on the first floor for a museum. Gil Plunkett donated \$150,000 toward the cause, finally assuring the restoration of the Swedenburg House.

The Pernoll Grange Store began on Pernoll property in the Applegate Valley in the 1860s. It was used as a store from 1876-1879. Since then, it has moved around. In the 1970s it was part of George McUne's Jacksonville Pioneer Village. When the Village was dismantled and the store was auctioned in 1985, the successful bidder, Don Rowlett, donated the building to SOHS which moved it to the corner of 6th and C streets in Jacksonville.

The Applegate Valley Historical Society was formed in order to return the Pernoll Store to the Applegate. On September 25, 1993, they moved the building on to the junction of Hwy 238 and North Applegate Road, its current location. It is probably the oldest log business building still standing in Southern Oregon.

DELVING into the SOHS ARCHIVES....

By Kira Lesley

The history of the SOHS Research Library, like that of the Society as a whole, is one of setbacks and perseverance, expansion and contraction.

Since the Society first began in 1946, the research library has existed in many different forms. For the first three decades, it was a hodgepodge of materials—some local, but many from outside the region—that sat in two rooms in the old Jacksonville Courthouse.

When Richard Engeman first arrived in Jacksonville in 1975, things looked a lot different. “There was a room that had some books in it, stacks of papers, and Britt photographic negatives stored in plywood boxes in envelopes that were made with butcher paper and masking tape,” Engeman remembers. “For me, it was like, ‘Oh boy, I get to start my own library!’” At the time, Jacksonville was an exciting place to be. The nation’s Bicentennial had stirred interest in history nationwide. The Jacksonville Historic District was only a decade old, and SOHS had recently received a collection of Britt prints and glass-plate negatives.

Engeman recalls the unorthodox nature of his job interview which took place in Executive Director Bill Burk’s car as he drove Engeman from Portland to Jacksonville. Burk was putting together a staff and looking to expand and professionalize the organization. Engeman, who holds B.A., M.A. and M.L.S. degrees, brought experience in a new field for libraries to the position—caring for photographs and information sources other than books and paper.

At that time, the library sat in the northwest corner of the Jacksonville Museum’s ground floor. Engeman notes that it had little in the way of organization. “I was starting off trying to do things like, ‘Okay, how do you process manuscript collections? How do you put this together?’” Engeman and others created the 3x5 card

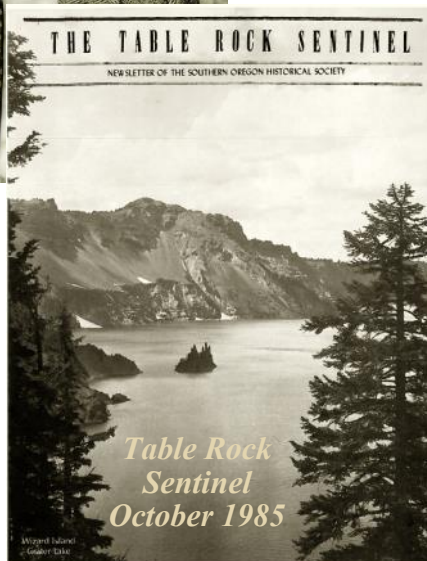
catalog, which is still in use in the downtown Medford History Center today.



Engeman fondly remembers library assistant Ida Clearwater, who was “wonderful,” to work with. Clearwater, who was Cherokee, had grown up in Oklahoma and was very interested in genealogy. She “became the backbone of the research library’s genealogy.”

Whereas Engeman had been accustomed to working in formal, structured institutions, at SOHS, the staff and volunteers strove to assist patrons who were not professional researchers. “In Jacksonville people came through the front door, went through the

museum, and on the way out said, ‘Say, my grandfather lived around here, do you have anything on him?’ We wanted to be able to respond to those kinds of things.”



In addition to performing herculean amounts of cataloging, the staff and volunteers during Engeman’s time revived the *Table Rock Sentinel* name and began a regular journal publication in 1980. SOHS has regularly published a historical newsletter ever since, though the name, frequency, and format

have changed several times. Although Engeman left SOHS in 1983, others picked up the research library torch.

Vicki Bryden’s first experience with the research library was in the 1970s, doing research on the South Oakdale neighborhood’s application to become Medford’s first registered Historic District. After serving on the SOHS Board in the 1980s, and later on the SOHS Foundation Board, Bryden says that her goal upon retiring from the Medford school district as a teacher, librarian, and media specialist

was to work in the SOHS Library. Around 2007, she began volunteering weekly. She worked alongside volunteer Alice Mullaly, who had started a few years earlier.

According to Mullaly, the library staff did not originally know how to use volunteers. The professional staff was wary of giving volunteers too much responsibility. However, after working with Mullaly for a while, Carol Harbison Samuelson and Kathy Enright entrusted her to organize 54 boxes of Hanley papers. For the next two years, Mullaly spent three hours per week indexing the 54 boxes. Mullaly remembers “The most frustrating part of this work was not being able to throw anything away—the one exception was a large box of empty blank envelopes.” But, she had to open each envelope first to make sure it was truly empty.

“Working with Carol Samuelson was such a pleasure,” Mullaly recalls. “She had an encyclopedic knowledge of both the collection and of local history and family connections. She started in Jacksonville at the library and was the head for many years.”

Budget shortfalls drove the Society’s then Executive Director Alison Weiss to close the research library to the public in 2009. Bryden and Mullaly were the only volunteers allowed to enter the library, which they did once a week, to answer e-mails. Kathy Enright remained on staff part time, but mainly dealt with registrar work.

While the library was closed to the public, people nationwide could receive assistance through e-mail, but local patrons were not allowed to come in and access materials. This situation seemed untenable to Bryden and Mullaly. They felt staffing the library with volunteers, while not ideal, was better than keeping the doors closed.

After eight months, Weiss agreed to let Bryden and Mullaly sound the call for volunteers. “When we put the word out asking for interested people to come to a meeting, 60 showed up!” Bryden recalls. “They had a wide variety of professions and other experiences, love of local history, and a willingness to support the library.” The library reopened with volunteers in May 2010.

After seeing the library’s value to the community, the Society hired Pat Harper as archivist in fall of that year.

Bryden notes, “She had the skills to bring the library technology into the 21st century!”

According to Harper, the previous library manager depended heavily on her impressive knowledge of the collection. “Since I could not duplicate that,” Pat says, “I introduced the strong focus on technology and indexing, depending on volunteers such as Bob Holbrook, Ben Truwe, Carol Holst, Barbara Moore, and many others to index resources.” She cites the development of the Society website for research as one of the



*Ida Clearwater
at her desk in
Jacksonville
Museum.
SOHS #30320.*

two most significant events in the library’s more recent history—the other being the early 1990s remodel that created a mezzanine and movable shelving in the archives.

When Harper arrived at SOHS, none of the holdings were searchable online. The Society had been using PastPerfect museum software to catalog items behind the scenes, but the public could not search this content. Harper decided to increase accessibility by using the online version of PastPerfect, making most of the catalog’s contents searchable. Harper also transformed the Society’s website from a simple Google website to one housing multiple databases, online exhibits, and research tools.

The new site allowed Harper to create a Mega Index, an online, keyword (ARCHIVES, continued on page 16)

ARCHIVES

(continued from page 15)

searchable, amalgamation of all the indexes found in books, manuscripts, etc. throughout the library, a valuable supplement to the online catalog. For example, a researcher looking for a Mrs. Jane Smith who lived in Prospect may not find any books on the history of Prospect if they search "Jane Smith" in the catalog. However, if a volunteer or staff member indexing a book on Prospect has noted a reference to Jane Smith on page 6 of the book, then a search in the Mega Index will point the patron towards the book. Not all materials in the library are indexed, but thousands are, and volunteers and staff are adding more continually.

Hard times struck the Society again in 2016 when voters rejected a levy to create an historic district. The Board made the decision to let go all paid staff. But a few months later, in February 2017, Bryden once again opened the library on an all-volunteer basis.

In 2018, Harper, who had again been hired as archivist while also volunteering her time as webmaster, created a partnership with the Jackson County Library Services. With their financial support, SOHS agreed to open more hours, waive the \$5 research fee for county residents, and make more materials available online. According to

the wording of the proposal, volunteers are vital to SOHS, but the professional archivist provides continuity of oversight and organization.

Kira Lesley joined as Assistant Archivist in June 2018, taking over for Harper when she retired as Archivist in January 2019. Lesley has continued providing research services, working through a backlog of cataloging materials, and developing partnerships with other organizations, such as Animus Mundi. Along with Collections Assistant Anna Sloan, she has contributed to outreach programming with OLLI, the Oregon Black Pioneers, and Jackson County Library Services.

The past year has been challenging, as Lesley navigated the uncertainties of COVID with an all-volunteer staff, many of whom were in a high-risk category. She greatly increased the amount of remote research requests fulfilled but looks forwarding to allowing more volunteers safely back in the building.

Lesley continues to be amazed by the long hours and hard work that volunteers give the library. The Research Library holds an invaluable collection of historic materials, but, according to Lesley, its greatest resource is the passion of the individuals who dedicate themselves to keeping this treasure open and accessible.



FREE FAMILY FUN NIGHTS at SOHS HANLEY FARM!

From 4 to 8pm every Thursday evening through September 2, SOHS will be celebrating its 75th Anniversary with free public events at Hanley Farm, located at 1053 Hanley Road in Central Point. Family activities include a fashion show, concerts, garden tours, heritage fairs, an antique car show, 4-H demonstrations, and an ice cream social.

For complete information, visit <https://sohs.org/hanley-events>



The Children's Heritage Fair

SOHS'S LASTING LEGACY of LEARNING

By Jeff LaLande

During its seventy-five years of existence as an active educational organization, the Southern Oregon Historical Society has developed some long-term traditions of serving the public. One of the oldest and most successful of these traditions has been the annual Children's Heritage Fair.

The Fair first began thirty-five years ago in 1985 during a time when SOHS operated from its Jacksonville Museum (the old county courthouse, built in the mid-1880s). The Society has continued to hold this extremely popular "hands-on" history learning effort for local school-children almost every year since then. The Fair has become a valued partnership between the Society and local schools. As many parents know, Oregon's public-school curriculum calls for a focus on the state's history during fourth grade, and so the Fair is aimed at fourth graders.



When washing was definitely a chore....
Photo Source: Mail Tribune

Originally (and for many years thereafter), the annual Children's Heritage Fair took place in SOHS's Children's Museum (the former county jail, next to the main museum). On the scheduled Spring days, dozens of yellow school buses, loaded with fourth graders from various schools throughout the region, arrived in Jacksonville at staggered scheduled times. Then, at the proper pre-set time, the kids, their teachers, and a few parent-volunteers got off a bus and poured into the children's museum. There, a truly impressive number of SOHS staff, volunteers, trustees, and others stood ready to greet each school group's entry. These SOHS volunteers stood at a wide range of "learning stations" where they explained (to smaller sub-groups of 6-8 children) by means of artifacts and short, exciting stories, the lifeways of our region's past residents – from the local Native peoples, to the gold miners, to the early-day farmers. In addition, students "panned for

gold" in replica sluice-boxes on the old courthouse's lawn, searched the Jacksonville Cemetery for the oldest and biggest gravestones, and visited the historic Beekman House, where an amazingly still-young-looking pioneer "Mrs. Beekman" would regale them with tales of her crossing on the Oregon Trail in a wagon well over a century before.

Since the Fair moved from Jacksonville to SOHS's historic Hanley Farm, the same process continues, but with the added benefit of being all outdoors! The yellow school buses still arrive, the children pile out, and the small groups "cycle through" each of the several learning stations. Each group participates in hands-on learning, such as pounding acorns with a mortar-and-pestle or identifying and feeling the furs of the different kinds of animals that were hunted and trapped here over 180 years ago. The event requires a large number of SOHS volunteers. It's always a very busy

day for everybody involved.

Like so many other things, the Fair has had to take a hiatus the past two Springs due to the COVID 19 pandemic. However, SOHS looks forward to continuing the Children's Fair tradition as soon as it's feasible. Over the years, with annual attendance averaging 2000 students, tens-of-thousands of local fourth graders have attended the Fair. Some of those children, from the 1980s and 1990s, have probably gone on to become parents whose own children have come to the Fair – a true legacy of learning.

Although 2021 will be without the Fair, families can still enjoy some of the very same activities (safely distanced) this summer. On "Third Thursdays" (June 17, July 15, August 19; from 4-8 p.m.), "Family Heritage Evenings" will feature the kinds of educational and fun activities as has the long-running Children's Heritage Fair.



SPOTLIGHT ON GREG APPLIN

by Larry Mullaly

Greg Applin, a long-time contributor to the Society, is in his third term as a member of the Board of Trustees. Born in California's San Fernando Valley, he grew up in Gold Hill, where as a boy passed his summer days swimming in the Rogue River. "I lived in the river, and was never happier," Greg recalls.

After graduating from Crater High School, he attended Oregon State University, then followed his father into the wood products industry, rising to the position of Vice-President of Medford Moulding Company.

Twenty years ago his archaeologist brother-in-law recruited Greg as a volunteer for some "digs," and Greg was hooked. His "hobby" led to his inventing screens that facilitate the "sifting" process. He was subsequently recruited by the Southern Oregon University Laboratory of Anthropology and has served as an excavator of Jacksonville's Chinatown

as well as for the major septic tank system installed in an archeologically sensitive zone at SOHS Hanley Farm in 2017.

Greg has always been active. "I have to be busy and like to get things done," he explains. He just finished remodeling a 1929 Frank Clark home, restoring a lot of the original features and doing a lot of the work himself.

He currently serves on the SOHS Hanley Farm Operations Committee and is an active member of the Museum Committee. Current handiwork can be seen in the farm's new front gate, signage, and the repositioning of much of our vintage farm equipment. He is also the developer of the bride's dressing-room project now underway.

This past March, in grateful thanks for Greg's dedication and hard work, the society honored him with its 2020 Outstanding Service Award.



*Greg Applin during the 2017
Excavation at SOHS Hanley Farm.*

MUSEUM

(continued from page 9)

accepted valuable gifts and loans to be added to the displays, keeping the collection as interesting and uncluttered as she could. Under her direction the museum grew, its artifacts becoming the nucleus of today's SOHS collection.

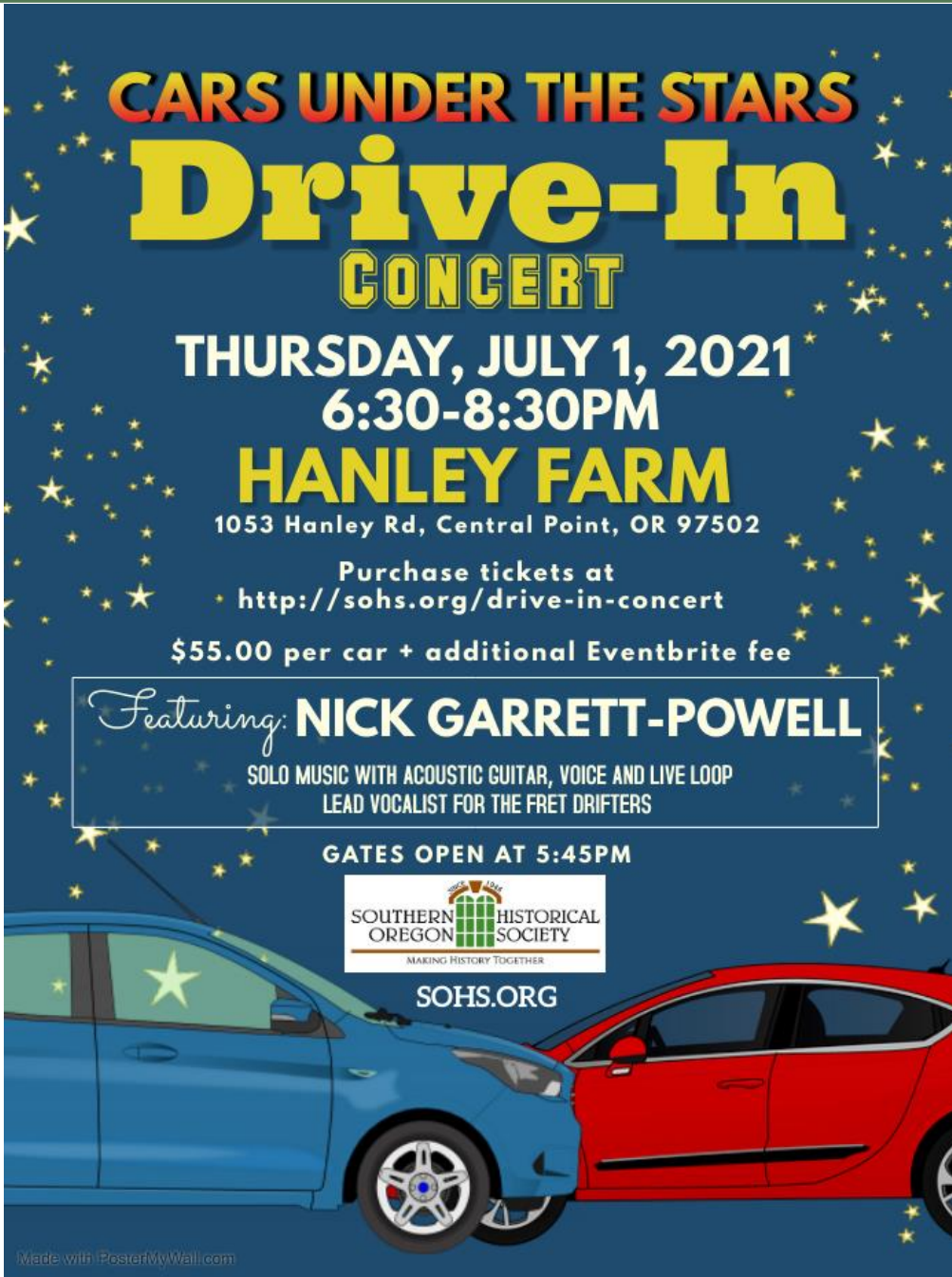
In 1946, the Southern Oregon Historical Society had been formed with the primary purpose of saving the historic Jackson County Courthouse and turning it into a regional museum. However, plans moved slowly, and the museum remained in a discussion stage for a long time. By 1949, the U.S. Hotel collection overflowed the space with many items having to be stored in a back room.

Then an April 1949 *Mail Tribune* announced that a committee formed by SOHS President Claire Hanley would consider applications for a museum curator and that E.E. Patterson of Portland had been named to serve in a temporary role. The U.S. Hotel museum collection was packed up and moved to the historic courthouse.

Grace was shocked. Although she applied for the position of curator, she was not even considered. The first curator hired had much less knowledge than Grace but she came with "recommendations." Apparently, Grace's association with the J'ville Tavern was the strike against her—ironic, given that the nucleus of the museum and the SOHS collection began in a saloon.

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*The Children's Heritage Fair:
SOHS's Lasting Legacy of Learning!
See page 17.*



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As part of the Southern Oregon Historical Society's 75th Anniversary celebration, we are offering new members a five-month trial membership to the Society at no cost!

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