

THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY



MAKING HISTORY TOGETHER

VIEWING HISTORY THROUGH ART

Art is everywhere! It comes in many forms from traditional drawing and painting to photography, sculpture, carving, metal work, weaving, quilting, and more, capturing a history of its time and place.

This issue of the SOHS Quarterly magazine is celebrating the rich and diverse history of art in the Rogue Valley with highlights from the Southern Oregon Historical Society's collection along with examples from other collections and works that are in the public domain.

We're also giving you a sneak peek below at a new mural that will soon be adorning the north side of the History Center, courtesy of the Medford Arts Commission (MAC).

Transportation history seemed like an obvious theme. After all, the railroad is how Medford came into existence. And in the early 20th Century, Medford had the most cars

per capita in the country! That may have led to Jackson being the first county in the state to pave its portion of Highway 99 from border to border.

In 1920 Medford built the first public airfield in Oregon, and five years later United Airlines began here as Pacific Air Transport Company. Mercy Flights, the nation's first non-profit ambulance service, was born here in 1949.

SOHS is pleased to be partnering with the MAC in this and other projects, sharing the riches of both regional history and art. This Quarterly provides what we hope is an artful and art-full sampling of Jackson County's wealth!



Muralist Kirk Seese will begin the project in early September.

PUBLIC ART BRINGS JACKSON COUNTY HISTORY TO LIFE

by Peter Finkle

Do you ever pay special attention to art during your tourist travels? I do. In fact, seeing art and history are two of the most exciting aspects of travel for me. Art often provides a perspective on history while history can provide a context for art.

Yet where we live, we tend to take both the art and the history around us for granted. Let's see if we can look with fresh eyes...and change "taking it for granted" to appreciation for local public art.

Jackson County is filled with public art that adds richness to our local history. You can appreciate art around you for its beauty alone. You can also see a little deeper. In this article, I'll try to share the beauty and a little of the "deeper" with you.

Britillaria Sculpture in Jacksonville

The Britt Festival was created on the estate of Jacksonville pioneer photographer and horticulturist Peter Britt. Born in Switzerland in 1819, Britt lived in Jacksonville from 1852 until his death in 1905.

If you have been to the Britt Festival in the past few years, it's hard to miss the dramatic red and gold flowers that tower over you near the entrance. These are Cheryl Garcia's artistic rendering of the endangered Jacksonville-area flower called *Fritillaria gentneri*. As a play on words, she named the sculpture Britillaria.

Doors at Eastwood Cemetery in Medford

This pioneer cemetery was established in 1890, only six years after Medford was founded. You can thank a once-large fraternal organization called the Independent Order of Odd Fellows for the I.O.O.F. Eastwood Cemetery.

During the 1920s, Axel Hall built the bronze doors of the Mausoleum here and at Ashland's Mountain View cemetery.

Vandals broke into the Eastwood Mausoleum several times, destroying the plate glass in the bronze doors. Metal artist Cheryl Garcia was asked to create artistic steel inserts for the bronze doors. Her delicate design in 3/16" thick steel honors the white oak trees in the cemetery.

Mural at Medford's Vogel Plaza

In 2018, the City of Medford decided to brighten the town with large murals. I like this explanation from a KDRV story. "The City of Medford decided to bring a mural to downtown because of what it does for a city. Through research, a team found that American adults like to travel to visit art. It also learned that

Left: Steel inserts in the Eastwood Cemetery Mausoleum, designed and crafted by metal artist, Cheryl Garcia. Photo Source: Cheryl Garcia.



companies relocating or growing locally want to come to places with a healthy cultural scene. Art contributes to that."

This colorful mural at Vogel Plaza was painted by Yulia Avgustinovich in 2019. The city asked the artist to feature the history of the Pear Blossom Festival, and she certainly succeeded. She wrote on her website that the bright, bold mural "celebrates the city's history, its agricultural past and present, its traditions and culture." The mural attracts people, and educational posters on the wall describe aspects of Medford's history.

Sculptures at Southern Oregon RV Park in Central Point

An RV Park seems like a surprising place to find beautiful public art. Don't let that deter you from enjoying these large Cheryl Garcia artworks commissioned by Jackson County Parks and the Watchable Wildlife Foundation.

Garcia sculpted two popular watchable wildlife animals: the great blue heron and Canada geese. If you look closely at the bellies of the birds, you'll see the foods they eat. This is public art to bring a smile and to educate at the same time.

"We Are Here" Sculpture in Ashland

"We Are Here" is a sculpture that honors local Native American history. It is also a prayer pole that embodies the recognition that Native people "are still here" now, and offers hope for future generations.

Native American wood carver Russell Beebe expressed Native culture, past and future, as well as nature and beauty in this 20 foot tall sculpture carved from an alder tree. You can see Beebe's original wood carving at the Southern Oregon University Hannon Library. It is visible from the outside through a two-story window. When the library is open, I encourage you to go inside and see it up close.

A bronze replica of the original wood carving now welcomes people at the North Main Street entrance to downtown Ashland. Artist Jack Langford captured every nuance of the wood carving through delicate molds, then 2000-degree liquid bronze, and finally the bronze sculpture you see today.

Both the wood carving and bronze replica feature the likeness of late Takelma elder Agnes Baker Pilgrim. She was an inspirational teacher who brought back the Takelma tribe's annual salmon ceremony at Ti'lomikh Falls on the Rogue River near Gold Hill, where it had been held for thousands of years. Their salmon ceremony, their culture and their land were all taken from the Takelma in 1856. During the 1856 Trail of Tears, all Rogue Valley Native Americans were evicted from their ancestral lands and moved more than 150 miles north to the Siletz and Grande Ronde reservations.

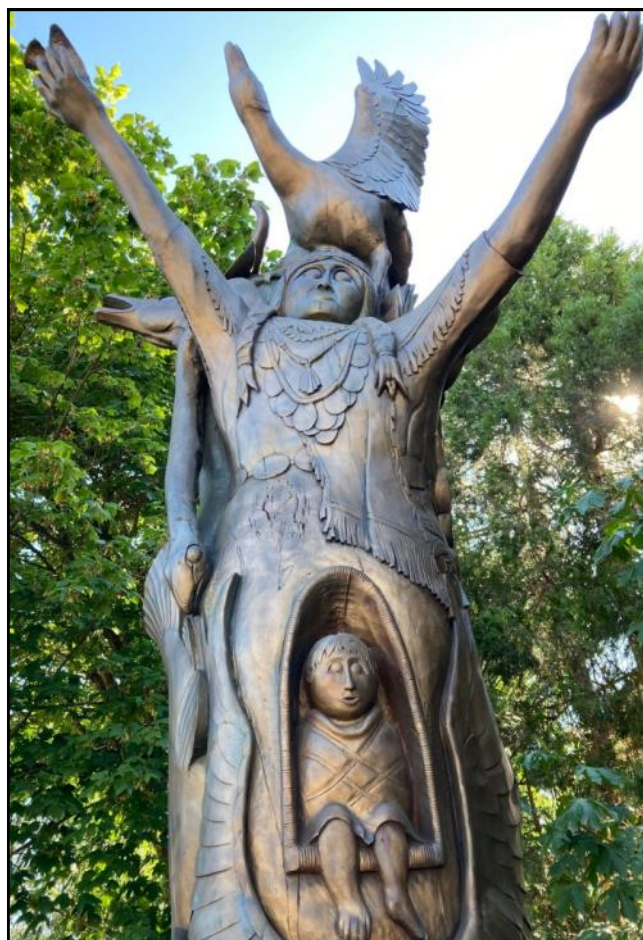
"We Are Here"—in both its wood and bronze forms—has become a place of prayer, education, and inspiration for local Native people and others who stop to appreciate its beauty and meaning.

The Value of Public Art

In a preceding paragraph, the quote about Medford states that public art brings visitors and economic vitality to a community. Equally important, it brings joy and refreshment to local residents—but only if we are willing to stop, look, and appreciate the artists'

creativity and the beauty of each artwork. Try noticing more of the art as you travel within your own town and throughout Jackson County. You will be pleasantly surprised by the riches of public art right here where we live.

Visit WalkAshland.com for Peter Finkle's photo essays about history and art in Ashland and surrounding areas.



*Above: Jack Langford's bronze replica of Russell Beebe's wooden "We Are Here" sculpture.
Photo Source: Peter Finkle.*

THE TIMELESS ART OF DORLAND ROBINSON

by Dawna Curler

The enduring art of Regina Dorland Robinson is as inspiring and relevant today as it was when first created more than a century ago.

Her sensitive portraits, moody landscapes, and ethereal still lifes have charmed multiple generations of those familiar with her work. This gifted early 20th-century artist, born and raised in Jacksonville, showed genuine artistic skill at a young age.

Recognizing their daughter's innate talent, her parents encouraged her pursuits by seeing that she had formal training and by enabling access to influential artists and patrons in Portland and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Dorland, as she was most often called, was on the brink of a promising career when she took her

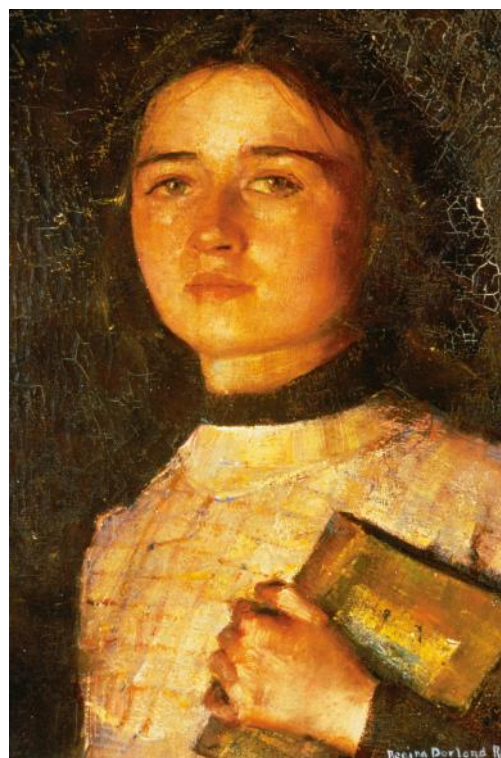
own life in 1917 at the age of twenty-five. Reasons for the suicide are not completely understood but likely related to her very brief and failed marriage. Despite her untimely

death, Dorland Robinson produced a surprising number of art pieces in a variety of mediums and styles during the dozen years between her early teens and mid-twenties. One can only speculate what she would have created and where her career would have gone had she lived longer.

Shortly after her fifteenth birthday in November of 1906, Dorland took art lessons in



*Lilies. Watercolor over Pastels.
SOHS #19_DRobinson*



*Self-Portrait, Oil on Canvas.
Photo Source: SOHS #26_DRobinson.*

California. The next year she studied life drawing and oil painting at the Oregon School of Art in Portland. In 1910-1911, when she was nineteen, Dorland and her parents spent seven months in Philadelphia where she took classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. In addition to her lessons, she observed examples of leading American painters in the school's gallery.

Upon returning to the West Coast, Dorland and her mother resided for a time in Oakland, California. There Dorland connected with the Bay Area art community and began exhibiting and selling her work. In 1916, when the art exhibition from the Panama-Pacific International Exposition was held over for another year, Dorland spent three weeks visiting the exhibit halls and viewing artwork from contemporary European and American masters. It is obvious that this cumulative exposure had major influences on the development and maturation of her own impressionistic style.

People are often impressed with finely crafted figure drawings Dorland did in charcoal, especially when it is noted that she was just 16 when she drew many of them; but it is her softly focused watercolor still lifes and creatively textured oil landscapes that stand out and underscore the unique character of her work.

Dorland's still life watercolors, sometimes layered over pastels, were executed with a wash technique that produced a dreamy liquid quality to the art. The earliest date on any of these distinctively styled paintings is 1911, indicating

she may have learned the technique while studying in Philadelphia but continued adding her personal touch over the next few years. The young artist favored flower-filled vases and fruit arrangements as subjects for these works. Based on her exhibition lists, roses appear to have been a popular choice. These paintings tend to be richly colored, and in some cases the hues are quite bold.

Many of Dorland's oil landscapes were scenes from the Rogue Valley.

Some of the most appealing are a series of tonalist paintings of farm buildings done in subtle shades of rosy beige and blues. On several of these she masterly contrasted smooth backgrounds with heavily textured

impasto foregrounds. Others have trees as the focal point. On these, brighter colors were used as in "Peach Blossoms," where a mass

May 4, 1912, the Oakland *Tribune* described one of Dorland's landscapes: "All the illusive coloring that the gray mist can give is there, with the exquisite tones of the beautiful Rogue River Valley shining softly through the mist. It is charming, full of spirit, of soul, the picture bearing the impress of the true artist."

Dorland displayed her artwork in a number of exhibitions during the last five years of her life including showings at the San Francisco Art Association, The Portland Art Association, and a one-woman show of 35 pieces during a luncheon at Medford's Holland

Hotel. The Southern Oregon Historical Society has acquired around 100 examples of Dorland Robinson artwork and has exhibited portions of the collection from time to time. In 2003, the Historical Society mounted a major exhibit of Dorland's drawings and paintings compiling not only works from the SOHS collection

but works in private collections as well.

(DORLAND, continued on page 7)



*Charcoal Figure Study
SOHS #23_DRobinson*

of pink pigment explodes on the canvas.

Contemporary newspaper reviews praised Dorland's

work. The March 8, 1917, issue of the San Mateo County *Times* claimed that her paintings showed "a rare feeling for form and color." On



*Charcoal Figure Study
SOHS #24_DRobinson*



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:

The Touchstones of Success

The Southern Oregon Historical Society is an interesting creature. Its mission is to preserve and share our regional history. Yet it has its own history as well.

When one looks back at SOHS in this seventy-fifth anniversary year, one realizes that the things we regard as significant were not so much the personalities or the SOHS activities. The true touchstones of success were those things done that kept Southern Oregon history alive.

During the first decade of the Society, an intense effort was made to place heritage artifacts in public view. It wildly succeeded. Two and a half years after the Society was established, the Jacksonville Museum opened. In 1950 the museum celebrated its 100,000th visitor. Things changed over time. The need to better serve the community inspired the development of our research library and a history magazine. A TV series was sponsored entitled "Share the Spirit." In the 1970s, special emphasis was placed on the young: the first festival for children was held in 1976, soon followed by the creation of a children's museum where youthful visitors could touch, hear, and feel history, rather than just look at it.

Behind all these efforts were dedicated trustees, staff, and volunteers. But their narratives are sidebars to the story of how well SOHS preserved and shared our heritage. In the earliest days, simply placing items on display seemed enough. Among the display areas in the original museum was a rock room, a Native American room, a toy room, and a gown room. It was several decades before interpretive exhibits were mounted. In more recent years, hands-on, family-centered activities became a staple of the

Children's Museum and of our Hanley Farm Living History programs.

Today we are looking to new ways to bring history alive. We are exploring the restoration of museum services in exciting new ways. Building relations with community partners is increasingly important. In a society where social media dominates people's lives and activities, we are seeking to reach a more diverse audience: the young, the homebound elderly, the marginalized. This year SOHS volunteers have taught two virtual Osher Lifelong Learning Institute courses on Southern Oregon history titled "A Tapestry of Cultures." Our monthly Windows in Time history is offered by Zoom technology in conjunction with Jackson County Library services. Making access to our collections available on-line is another step in this direction.

To encourage such changes, the SOHS Board of Trustees, at its August 2021 meeting, adopted an updated *Vision and Plan*. The document speaks to the unique service and mission of the Society and how it can blend successful programs with new forms of outreach involving schools and media. We will be sharing this with you in coming days. It honors the vision that has animated our wonderful Society across seventy-five years of its existence: "To bring history alive by collecting, preserving and sharing the stories and artifacts of our region's past."

- Doug McGeary

**Share the
SOHS
Quarterly
with a Friend!**



As part of the Southern Oregon Historical Society's 75th Anniversary, we are offering **new members** a FREE 5-month trial membership to the Society.

This includes the next issue of our popular *SOHS Quarterly Magazine* and reduced admissions to Society programs and services.

Enroll on-line at: sohs.org/membership

DORLAND

(continued from page 5)

As a follow-up to the exhibit, the Historical Society published a coffee table book in 2007 highlighting Dorland's best works from both private holdings and the SOHS collection and containing the most complete documentation of her life and work known to date. It is interesting to note that since the publication of *A Lasting Impression: The Art and Life of Regina Dorland Robinson*, the existence of nearly a dozen previously unknown signed Dorland Robinson works have been identified. Some of these pieces have surfaced at thrift shops and were purchased for many dollars well below their worth. Others were acquired years ago by families with ties to the Robinsons or to Jacksonville. Among these exciting finds have been a self-portrait, seascapes, still lifes, and an interior painting of an attic room with an easel that may have been Dorland's 1912 Oakland studio.

Old news articles and exhibition lists name other paintings and pastels by Dorland that have not yet been located. Like buried treasures, there are at least another dozen, if they have survived, waiting to be found.

Although more than one hundred years have passed since Regina Dorland Robinson last picked up a brush or scratched lead to paper, her talent and genius live on with her art. Through her creations, this sensitive young woman from a small town in Oregon has managed to touch hearts and stir imaginations decades past her time.

(Right) Portrait by Dorland Robinson, 1916.
SOHS# Not Yet Assigned

Executed in pastels, this is a life-sized portrait of Elizabeth Reese Hanley, wife of Ed Hanley



who was the son of Michael and Martha Burnett Hanley. The 1857 Hanley donation land claim is now a Century Farm owned by the Southern Oregon Historical Society. The dress and matching shoes worn in the portrait are also part of the SOHS collection.

EUGENE BENNETT'S ENDURING LEGACY

by Carolyn Kingsnorth

Eugene Peart Bennett called his 2006 one-man show at Medford's Rogue Gallery & Art Center his "last hurrah"—a fitting description since it was his last public show.

It was also a fitting location because he was one of the founders of the Rogue Valley Art Association, the forerunner of the gallery.

Over the course of almost 89 years, this nationally acclaimed artist had many "hurrahs" prior to his death in 2010. Deemed "the elder statesman" and the "dean" of Southern Oregon artists during his lifetime, even today Bennett's work continues to defy categorization, ranging from beautiful florals to bold geometric mixed media, including various blends of the two. He created photos, prints, collages, even a series of "totem poles" combining tacks, nails, and various "found objects."

His poles graced the entrance to the Oregon Pavilion at the 1962 World's Fair in Seattle.

Bennett's work is in the collections of the Smithsonian's National Gallery, the Chicago Art Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Schneider Museum at Southern Oregon University, and many private art collections.

Bennett would try just about anything, admitting to becoming bored with any one thing after too long. This attitude was reflected in a Ralph Waldo Emerson quote that hung on a wall in his studio: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds."



Eugene Bennett, April 1986. Photo Source: Eugene Bennett

Born in Central Point in 1921, Bennett was the youngest of four children in a musical family. He learned to play the piano and pump organ by ear, and he took violin lessons. However, his creative talents were far ranging and throughout grade school he also created marionettes, set designs, and even a puppet theater with footlights. Ironically perhaps, it was Bennett's high school music teacher who taught Bennett oil painting techniques.



Formation, 1958.

His teacher, John Reisacher, was also a painter. When Reisacher introduced Bennett to Cezanne, it was a revelation. Childhood years in Prospect had cultivated a love of nature in Bennett, and he had become enthralled with creating nature on canvas. After being introduced to Cezanne, Bennett began analyzing natural forms and rendering their shape on canvas like a

sculptor working in relief.

However, music prevailed for the time being. In 1940, Bennett enrolled at the University of Oregon as a music student. His talent flourished. His compositions were

featured in university productions and one of his songs was performed in an Oregon Shakespeare Festival production of “Much Ado about Nothing.” But, although not formally studying art, he did continue to develop his artistic skills.

When World War II erupted, Bennett honored his country’s call, enlisting in the Navy. By this time he had realized that he lacked the discipline to be a concert pianist. He also determined that a sketch pad was more portable than a piano. Bennett decided to devote himself to art rather than music.

While stationed in Parkville, Missouri, he was able to attend classes at Park College. Under the influence of his art teacher, John Tatschl, Bennett began to appreciate abstract art and to discover the suggested shapes found in nature. Bennett’s work became more abstract, using lines to emphasize abstract forms and rhythms.

After the war, Bennett attended the Art Institute of Chicago on a GI Bill, earning both bachelor’s and master’s degrees. While still a student, he was honored with a solo show at the Portland Art Museum. Following graduation, he taught at the Art Institute and at New Trier Township High School in Winnetka, Illinois. But each summer Bennett would return to Medford to teach for six to eight weeks.

In 1954 Bennett moved to Italy and traveled extensively in Italy and France, taking in the architecture, the art, and the culture. During this period, he produced an extraordinary amount of work and absorbed a broad range of new influences. When he returned to Chicago a year

later, his works were shown in various exhibitions, and in 1957 the Art Institute awarded him the Renaissance Prize for Cathedral Forms.

Even though Bennett’s artwork was receiving accolades in Chicago, he couldn’t wait to get back to Oregon. He recalled how much he missed the Rogue Valley, calling the Table Rocks and Roxy Ann “old friends.”

When Bennett moved back to Medford in 1958, there were no galleries in the Valley. He later recalled, “All they had were frame shops with a few pictures on display. Over at Southern Oregon College (now SOU), they had things hung in the basement which wasn’t a good space for art.”

Shortly after his return, Bennett and three colleagues organized the Rogue Valley Art Association, the predecessor of the Rogue Gallery and Art Center. The four of

them announced a meeting in the paper and a lot of artists turned up. Today’s Rogue Valley art community grew from that beginning.

(BENNETT, continued on page16)



Above: Italy, 1955. Oil on Canvas.



Autumn Impressionist Forest, 1966.

Dora Scheidecker's **JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM QUILTERS**

by Sue Waldron

It wasn't immediately obvious in 1966 when Dora Scheidecker and her family arrived in Medford just how large an impact she would have on quilt makers in the Rogue Valley.

Dora was the Freshman Girls Counselor at Medford High School. She retired from the school district in 1976 and she and her husband, Elton, moved to Jacksonville.

Jacksonville was home to the Jacksonville Museum. Managed by the Southern Oregon Historical Society, the museum depended on volunteers. Dora started in the Collections Department organizing, identifying, and helping to maintain their extensive textile collection.

Working at first with items of clothing, Dora noticed the large number of finished quilts, quilt tops, and many stacks of unassembled quilt blocks. These became her focus.

Dora had learned to quilt from her mother when she was a teenager. Soon Dora was recruiting others to help her repair quilts, and then later to back, layer, and hand quilt the unfinished tops. Quilting materials cost money, so the group decided to market their skills to raise funds.

Their first big project was the Jacksonville Bicentennial Quilt. The idea for the quilt came from the Jacksonville Boosters Club. Drawings by local artists Bruce and Annie Butte were translated in fabric and the quilt assembled and hand quilted in five months in 1976 by members of the newly organized Jacksonville Museum Quilters (JMQ).



*Dora Scheidecker demonstrates hand stitching to Jacksonville Museum Quilters.
Photo Source: SOHS #4457.*

The Bicentennial quilt began the JMQ tradition of making a history-themed quilt. In 1979 the featured quilt was the Gin Lin Dragon quilt, based on an elaborate Chinese embroidered robe Dora found in the museum's collection. The quilt was designed to commemorate the Chinese who settled in early Jacksonville, one of them being prominent mining entrepreneur Gin Lin.

"We have nothing left to remember them by but a few stone walls, sluices and ditches," Dora said. She designed and made the quilt top then recruited other Quilters to do the hand quilting. Many hours were devoted to incorporating the symbolism represented in the intricate applique and detailed background quilting.

It was about this time that Dora decided that the group should learn new quilting techniques. A visit to Hawaii inspired Dora to design the "Manzanita of Kanaka Flats" quilt to remember the early-day Hawaiian gold miners who settled in Jacksonville. The quilt was made using Hawaiian quilting traditions and Oregon's ever-present manzanita bush.

In 1981 Dora wanted the group to experience "trapunto." The museum had one stunning example of the technique

in their collection. While looking for quilting design elements Dora chose the circular motifs on the brass doorknobs in the museum. The museum was located in the former Jackson County Courthouse, built in 1883. She also used ornamentation on a pipe-organ and a clock on display in the museum.

Indian Jennie, “the last of the Rogue River Indians,” was the theme for the 1983 quilt. This intricate image was based on an 1892 photograph of Jennie in her burial dress taken by pioneer photographer Emil Britt. In addition to over two hundred buttons, Dora incorporated antique trade beads and dentalia. She further enhanced the dress with elaborate embroidery and real hair and used narrow ribbon to weave Jennie’s cap.

1984 brought the “Maryum’s Yellow Rose” quilt. Working with a McKee-family descendant, Evelyn Williams, the quilt depicts episodes from the McKee family’s history after their arrival in Jackson County in 1853. Each of the yellow roses surrounding the center medallion represent a member of the first McKee family, a reminder of the yellow rose cuttings that Maryum McKee brought with her on the wagon train. The roses are still thriving today.

The Jacksonville Museum Quilters’ featured quilt for 1985 was the “Medford Railroad Centennial” which

remembered the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the railroad in Medford. The center image was created by artist Carl

Strand and one of the borders features pairs of pears, highlighting the impact of the arrival of the railroad on the local fruit-growing industry. The quilt was a part of the museum’s “Making Tracks” exhibit for three years.

After ten years the Jacksonville Museum Quilters had become renowned for their expertise with pictorial applique. That year, 1986, working with a student at Southern Oregon State College, the Quilters applied ten images of structures important to the 1887

completion of the railroad over the Siskiyou Mountains to connect Oregon and California. Known as the “Ashland Railroad Centennial” quilt, the center medallion depicts a topographical map of the railroad’s torturous route through the mountains.

The following year Dora teamed up with Evelyn Williams again. They designed a quilt to commemorate the re-enactment led by George McUne of the first wagon trip over the South Road or Apple-gate Trail in 1847. McUne lived in Jacksonville and ran the tourist attraction “Pioneer Village.”



Above: Gin Lin Quilt and
Chinese Imperial Nine Dragon Robe, SOHS #1979.3.75

(QUILTERS, continued on page 12)

QUILTERS

(continued from page 11)

In their continuing effort to learn and share older techniques, the Jacksonville Museum Quilters made three quilts one year using the “stab or poke method.” The technique requires the hand stitching to be so close as to look machine made.

To demonstrate the wide range of ways to connect fabric, in 1987 the quilt show focused on a display of JMQ’s collection of individual quilt blocks. Early in their history Dora had asked the members to begin a practice of making a sample block of whatever quilt pattern intrigued them at the time. Over the years the number of sample blocks in their collection grew to 582. Over 1,000 people attended the quilt show that year.

About this same time the Quilters created the “Oregon Trail 150th Anniversary” quilt. Teamed up again with Evelyn Williams, Dora recreated in fabric Williams’ drawings of how it might have been when the first emigrants made the long weary trip to Oregon.

When Dora’s husband died in January 1988, she moved to Beaverton, Oregon, and then in 2002 to Butte, Montana. Dora passed away in March 2003. Dora was born a teacher. She taught children for thirty years and then moved on to teaching anyone who wanted to learn about quilting. Many of us are richer for having been her student.

The Jacksonville Museum Quilters are still creating stunningly beautiful quilts. Two of their historical quilts are part of the Southern Oregon Historical Society Collection. The others were donated to the Jackson County Genealogical Society, and you can find them on display in the reading room at the Society’s Library.



Left: “Indian Jennie, last of the Rogue River Indians” quilt. Jacksonville Museum Quilters’ 1982 project.

The quilt is based on Emil Britt’s 1892 photograph of Shasta Indian, Lady Oscharwasha, (above), also known as “Jennie.”

Jennie posed for the photograph in the gown she had designed and made for her burial.

Photo Source: SOHS #00773.

TOM SMITH:

Cultural Interpreter for Native American Arts and Culture

by Sharon Bywater

Tom Smith identifies as much with his adopted Native American name, Kayo (Grey Bear), as with his birth name.

Part Cherokee and part Welsh, he moves easily between both worlds, comparing Native American sweat lodges and vision quests to church services and prayers. Above all, he feels a need to recreate Native American artifacts and teach others about them and the cultures they represent. He calls himself an artisan, not an artist, but his work is of a sophisticated craftsmanship and historical accuracy that draws a thin line between the two.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, Smith grew up in South San Francisco during World War II when his father deployed to the Pacific with the Navy. His mother took him to the West Coast when Tom was a year old. But it is White City near the Table Rocks that he has called home for over 40 years. Identifying closely with his Native American roots, he became a student of its history and culture, using his artistic talent to reproduce Native artifacts out of wood, stone, weaving, and beadwork. He initially worked in the lumber industry, making artifacts in his spare time. As the lumber industry waned in Southern Oregon, and not sure how to make a living, he took his wife's suggestion to focus on his Native artwork.

In 1997, Smith was hired by the Southern Oregon Historical Society as part of its Native American life-ways program. Over time, he became an integral part of SOHS, working in its museums, at Hanley Farm, and in

schools and state parks. He worked with the SOHS staff members at the Jacksonville Museum, curating displays from the SOHS collection, until the museum closed in 2010. The artifacts are now stored in a warehouse in White City.

Smith worked closely with SOHS staff members, including Suzanne Warner and Stephanie Butler, whom he credits with helping him to succeed. He said, "It's one of the most enjoyable jobs I've ever had."

The artifacts in the SOHS collection include tools used in hunting, gathering, fishing, and cooking—items such as stone mortars and pestles, arrowheads, and intricately woven baskets. According to Curator Stephanie Butler, "the Southern Oregon Historical Society is privileged to care for a wide variety of artifacts that document the lives of these early people." SOHS also preserves their history through manuscripts and photographs. The SOHS collection of native artifacts and archives is second only to that of the Oregon Historical Society.

Always interested in educational outreach, Smith demonstrated tool-making skills and other Native American crafts through "Acorns and Arrowheads," a SOHS program to present Native American culture to local school groups. Using his own reproductions of native artifacts, he has taught young people about

(TOM SMITH, continued on page 14)



Tom Smith, dancing. Photo by Stuart Cotts.



TOM SMITH

(continued from page 13)

Native cultures, hoping to keep the knowledge alive for future generations. He was the first Native interpreter hired to present these programs on a regular basis in Southern Oregon and has been an ambassador for Native American history and culture for many years.

In his educational programs he uses authentic materials whenever possible to reproduce artifacts in the style of different Native American tribal bands. He makes hand-carved pipes out of manzanita and soapstone, like those used by local Southern Oregon tribal bands. Tribes in Southern Oregon include the Takelma, Klamath, Umpqua, Shasta, and Tututni, among others. Local bands used wooden spoons in the first acorn gathering of the season to eat acorn mush. Some were made from elk antlers, but Smith's reproductions are of wood from the area. He crafts drums, feathered rattles that were part of puberty rituals, as well as arrowheads, beautifully carved and beaded war clubs, and intricate wooden salmon hooks.

To make his educational presentations lively, Smith demonstrates how the artifacts were used while telling early Native stories and myths. The role of Native storyteller is not taken lightly; it is inherited or earned by tribal members. For this reason, Smith sought and received permission from local elders, including Agnes Baker Pilgrim, known as "Grandma Aggie," the oldest living member of the local Takelma tribe until her death in 2019. He also climbed the Table Rocks, a sacred place for the Takelma for millennia, to seek guidance from the spirits of the ancestors. He described it as a transformative experience that "gave me the self-confidence I needed" to tell local Native American stories. One favorite is that of the Acorn Woman who was eventually turned into what is now known as Mt. McLoughlin, but before that she turned her two twin brothers into the Table Rocks.

Smith is a respected elder and leader of Native American programs with the Department of Veterans Affairs in White City, one of the earliest, if not the first, military site to hold a powwow. He carried the eagle staff, a Native American flag that he crafted out of feathers in the style of the Plains Indians, at VA Native ceremonies for 20 years. Intended to promote spiritual healing, the powwows are attended by Native veterans from all over the country, as well as non-Native Veterans. A few years ago, Smith passed the responsibility of carrying the staff to the first female veteran.



Examples of Tom Smith's craftsmanship.

Top: Beaded handle of war club adorned with horse hair.

Center: Carved "heddle" style loom (left); carved ball club (right)

Bottom: Woven sash.

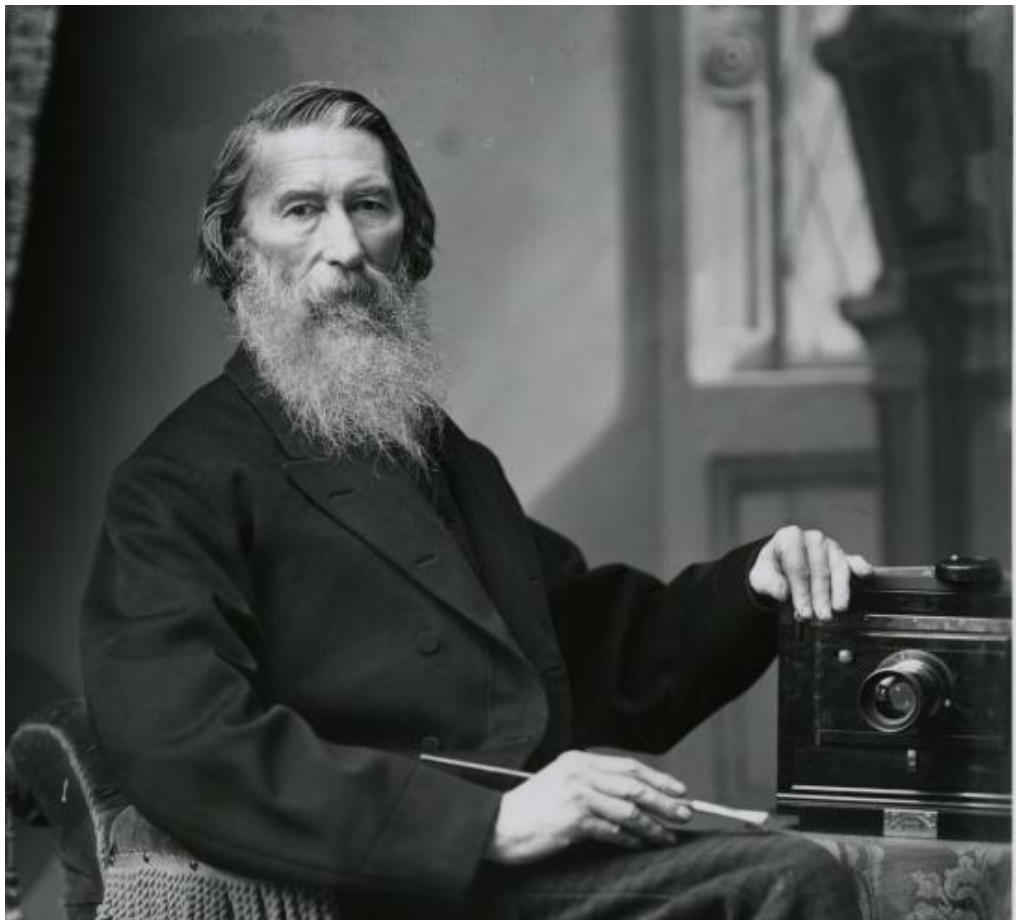
Photographs courtesy of Stuart Cotts.

Working in collaboration with the Oregon Youth Authority, Smith, and a small group of Native American men, have conducted sweat lodge ceremonies for at-risk teens. Not limited to Native Americans, the sweat lodges include participants from varied cultural backgrounds with the goal of helping them to improve their lives. According to Smith, these ceremonies allow young people to safely air their emotions in a spiritual setting. He has helped direct the program for 22 years although COVID-19 has put a pause on this and other activities.

Smith himself is of a mixed racial background, and he feels able to speak easily to people of Native American as well as Anglo cultures. He explained, “I’ve always felt like a bridge. I’m Welsh and Cherokee, so I fit right in. If I hear bagpipes, I get the same thrills as when I hear a big (Native American) drum.”

Although COVID-19 restrictions have stalled his educational outreach work, they haven’t stopped him from recreating Native artifacts. In addition to carving and beadwork, he weaves traditional patterns into colorful sashes on a hand-made loom. The sashes can be used in ceremonial dress or to tie a baby to a decorated cradle board.

Having gained personal satisfaction from his work creating Native American crafts and promoting tribal cultures, Smith sees himself as part of a community effort. “I didn’t get there by myself. A lot of people supported me along the way,” he emphasized. While he attributes his success to people he has worked with and taught over the years, his consummate skill in carving, bead working, and weaving speaks for itself.



*Peter Britt, seated portrait with his first camera and paintbrush.
Photo Source: Cropped image of SOHS #725.*

PETER BRITT: RENAISSANCE MAN

No Rogue Valley art overview would be complete without at least a mention of Peter Britt. A trained portrait artist in his native village in Switzerland, he learned the new arts of daguerreotyping, then photography, after immigrating with his parents and brother to America in 1845.

Like many young men of the day, Britt caught “gold fever” and came West to seek his fortune. He arrived in Jacksonville in November 1852 with five dollars in his pocket, a yoke of oxen, a mule, and a two-wheeled cart of photographic equipment. When gold mining literally didn’t “pan out,” he and three fellow Swiss-Germans ran a pack train between Jacksonville

and Yreka until they earned enough to pursue other interests.

Britt was an entrepreneur and his interests ranged far and wide. He is credited with being the father of Southern Oregon’s wine, orchard, and commercial horticulture industries. He also continued his painting, focusing on portraits and landscapes.

However, Britt is probably best known for his photography. From the 1850s to 1900, he documented Southern Oregon’s people, activities, and landscapes. It’s in part thanks to Britt’s photography that Crater Lake was named a National Park in 1902, and that Jacksonville was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966.

BENNETT

(continued from page 9)

A lot of that growth can be attributed to Bennett. He is credited with providing leadership for the visual arts in Oregon, and with introducing more progressive and modern techniques, especially through his teaching. In a 1994 interview, former Rogue Gallery director, Nancy Jo Mullen, stated, "Without Gene the Rogue Valley could have been a wasteland. He knew what was missing. I think that's as important a part of his legacy as the fine work he's done."

In 1962 Bennett moved from Medford to Jacksonville and bought the historic Eagle Brewery Saloon which he renovated into living quarters, a studio, and a gallery. There he produced what became his "signature" landscape and garden scenes and settled down to becoming a "serious artist." His work was shown at the Brooklyn Museum, New York City Museum of Modern Art, and the San Francisco Museum of Art. Bennett also remained heavily involved with the Rogue Gallery and exhibited his work there on numerous occasions.

Bennett was the first recipient of the Arts Council of Southern Oregon's Lifetime Achievement Award. He

was a featured artist on the television show "Oregon Art Beat" in 2001. In 2002 he was honored with the Governor's Arts Award for work that has "significantly contributed to the growth and development of Oregon's cultural life." Bennett considered that award the best thing that happened to him in Oregon.

Although a degenerative eye condition called "benign essential blepharospasm" would limit Bennett's vision and work in later years, for 50 years he had a tremendous impact on the visual arts in Southern Oregon. And that impact did not end with his death. When Bennett passed away in 2010, he bequeathed a \$500,000 endowment to the Rogue Gallery and Art Center, a gift enabling them to continue Bennett's vision of bringing the visual arts to the region and of building future generations of southern Oregon artists.

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SCARECROW FESTIVAL

October 2nd & 3rd
11:00am-4:00pm

Hanley Farm,
1053 Hanley Road,
Central Point

Make a Scarecrow or Take Home a Kit

Decorate your yard or
protect your garden!
Build a straw
stuffed scarecrow or
hanger scarecrow.

Admission: Free

Straw Kits:

SOHS members, \$10; Non-members, \$15.

Hanger Kits: \$10.

All materials provided.

Plus children's games and activities!

Masks and physical distancing required; work tables and
tools sanitized between groups. Contact info required.

Enter your scarecrow in our People's Choice contest.
Winners receive prizes and press coverage!



WREATH MAKING

at

Hanley Farm

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27TH

11am to 4pm

Make a wreath or buy a kit!

Kits contain grapevine or fruitwood bases,
evergreens, cones or berries, and wire.

Bring your own ribbon, ornaments, and trimmings

SOHS members, \$10; Non-members, \$15.

And watch for Santa in the big red truck!

(COVID mandates will be observed.)



1053 Hanley Road between Central Point and Medford



WINDOWS IN TIME

Southern Oregon History On-Line Zoom Series

THE AMAZING JOURNEY OF LEONARD CASE AND THE EXECUTION OF CAPTAIN JACK

October 6, 2021, 12n-1pm

Todd Kepple, manager of the Klamath Museum,
sheds new light on the bitter conclusion of
the Modoc Indian War.

OREGON'S LEAST-KNOWN MOUNTAINS: THE HUMAN AND NATURAL HISTORY OF THE KLAMATH/SISKIYOU RANGES

November 3, 2021, 12n-1pm

Jeff LaLande addresses human interaction with the
rugged geography, the complex geological history,
and the stunning biological diversity of what are
Oregon's least-known mountains.

Register at <https://jcls.libcal.com/event/>



IDA HARGROVE:

Amateur Photographer

by Pat Harper

At a time when photography was not considered feminine, Ida Hargrove set up her tripod anywhere she chose!

Ida Hargrove was a brilliant amateur photographer whose subjects posed for her in unusually playful tableaux, often in the millinery shop she owned with her sister Anna.

The Southern Oregon Historical Society owns about 250 glass plate negatives created by Ida Hargrove, and perhaps her sister Anna, taken over a 10-year span prior to Ida's marriage to Robert Proctor Neil in 1912. (She was 46 and Neil was 61.) Thanks to interest in the plates and donations from Ashland residents, SOHS had prints made that are now in the Archives. Many of the prints depict women who worked in the millinery shop owned by Anna and Ida. Other show men and women in Ashland's parks and other natural settings, sometimes having fun, sometimes maintaining the physical distance that co-ed outings seemed to require.

Oddly enough, the collection has been referred to at SOHS as the Simpson-DeHaven collection, although neither man took the photos nor donated them. Fortunately, they did save the glass plates! Glenn Simpson, a grand nephew of Ida's and Anna's, kept them until he passed them along to DeHaven, who sold them to the person who eventually donated them to SOHS.

On November 23, 2021, Pat Harper will give a Zoom talk for Rogue Valley Genealogical Society, featuring the Hargrove sisters, their family connections, their successful millinery store in Ashland, and of course SOHS's collection of Hargrove photographs.

Top right: Anna and Ida don comical attire to pose as a pioneer couple. SOHS #15462.

Bottom right: A carefully composed intimate photo of women, rare for its time. SOHS #37952





Spotlight on **PAMELA DAVIS-LUMLEY: ARTIST**

by Larry Mullaly

When Pamela Davis-Lumley speaks of history and art, she sparkles. A member since 2014 of the Gold Diggers, the SOHS women's auxiliary, and a mainstay of the Southern Oregon Historical Society Marketing Committee, she has been active in Society affairs for two decades and was one of the chief organizers of the major 2004 SOHS exhibit commemorating the centennial of flight in the Rogue Valley. But it is as an artist that her gifts take on a particular light and texture.



Pamela began sketching at a young age, and when seven learned the fundamentals of Japanese ink-wash painting from a talented housekeeper in Japan. A few years later, a U.S. Air Force sergeant who was also an artist coached her, saying that before attempting to use oil colors she needed to master solid black-and-white and shading.

She was always fond of horses, and when she was a young woman, serendipity tied these two interests together. "My career as a portrait artist started at a racetrack, where I worked walking and grooming horses. A jockey noticed me sketching in the downtime between morning workouts and the afternoon races and asked me to draw his favorite horse. That drew a crowd, and requests for more." The money she earned helped her buy a horse.

By the end of high school, Pamela had developed skills with pastels and oil and studied Leonardo DaVinci drawings to master the use of charcoal with white highlights. Later, she was taught by a former conservator from the Louvre Museum in Paris how the Old Masters had ground powdered pigments to make paints. Drawing from the study of renaissance and baroque artists, she developed a unique style of classic realism. "I aim for art that somehow transcends what can be shown in a photo. Working on canvas or paper, you can get the best of everything: expression, angle, lighting," she explains. "I try to get the artwork to express the personality and emotional experience that inspired it."

Pamela also became proficient in commercial art — skills acquired illustrating vocational training manuals while majoring in art and music at the University of Texas at Austin. Today she contracts over the Internet and uses the latest digital tools.

Pamela continues to be devoted to thoroughbred horses, and she finds a similar kind of magic and power in flying — the result of air shows which as a girl she often attended with her father. Her meticulously researched artwork has been featured in *Aviation*

Week and Space Technology, and she painted the official posters for the last three Medford air shows. Pamela's art has been shown at the Canada Aviation and Space Museum and was chosen for a special exhibit at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum.

Portraits of horses have brought her the most recognition, however, and her paintings are on exhibit in collections across the United States, Great Britain, and Europe, including the permanent collection of The International Museum of the Horse in Lexington, Kentucky.

She learned to love history from her grandmother, who was a self-taught expert on geology and Native American artifacts. For Pamela, history was always a mystery to be solved. "It started when I was seven and found a square nail," she explains. "I just had to find out why it was made that way, and why all the other nails I'd seen were round."

Pamela has done extensive restoration to her home, one of the oldest Victorians in Medford and a candidate for the National Register of Historic Places. Pamela was an original organizer of the Chinese New Year commemoration in Jacksonville and has been active in other community projects. This gifted artist provides much of Southern Oregon Historical Society's artwork, and she has been a frequent volunteer at society events. We are delighted that Pamela chooses to share her multiple talents with us!

CURRENT RESIDENT OR



FROM THE COLLECTION



WATERCOLORS BY ELIZABETH EDMONDSON

The Southern Oregon Historical Society collection includes a series of 60 charming botanical watercolors painted by Butte Falls artist Elizabeth Edmondson in 1940 and 1941. Elizabeth Sarah Swihart Edmondson lived from 1894 to 1956. The Butte Falls Garden Club donated the paintings to SOHS following Elizabeth's death.