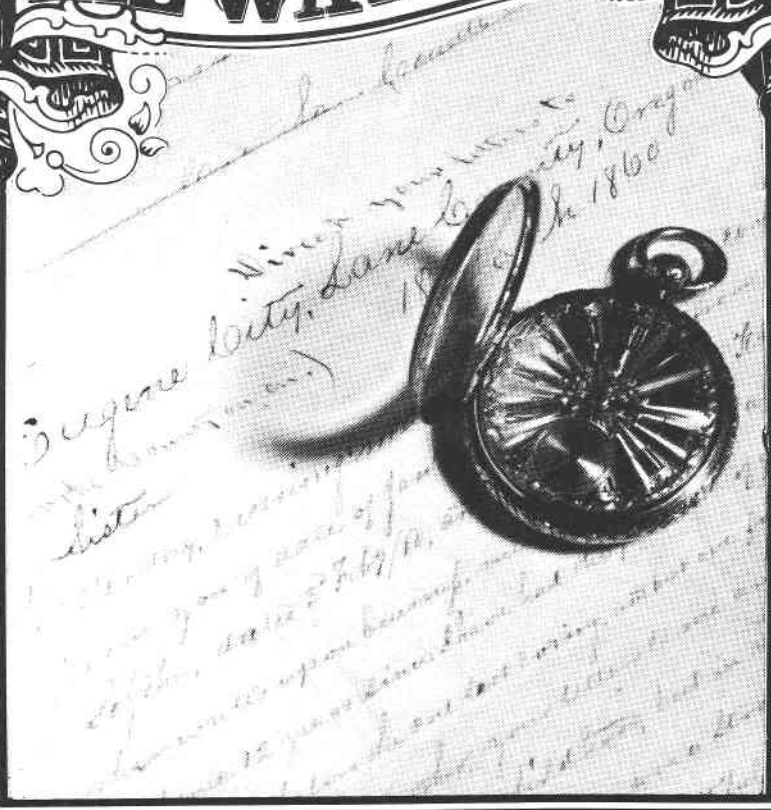


# Lane County Historian



## THE WAY IT WAS



The Lane County Historical Society

Vol. XXI, No. 2

Winter 1976

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# LANE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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**Hallie Hills Huntington, President, 89239 Old Coburg Road, Eugene, Oregon 97401**  
**Stuart Hurd, Membership Chairman 90901 Coburg Rd., Eugene, Oregon 97401**  
**Pete Peterson, Editor 1937 Olive St., Eugene, Oregon 97401**

## Special contributors

**Wilma Sanders**, writing about Eugene Skinner's clothes, has agreed to contribute regularly to The Historian, writing on Oregon costuming and fashion.

Mrs. Sanders' specialty, by the way, is Oregon Pioneer Costuming -- her master's thesis from the University of Oregon is an enjoyable treatment on the style and construction of clothing in the Oregon Territory from the 1820's to the 1850's.

**Jerold Williams** contributes his second article to The Historian, and like Mrs. Sanders, will edit special pieces for each issue. A descendent of the Thomas and Hannah Williams pioneer family (D.L.C., 1853) he has a special interest in logging and forest resources in Lane County. His piece, "The Late Great Mt. June Flume Company," is an example of his personal knowledge of this area's logging history.

**Milton Madden**, American history instructor at LCC, will review books and other historical writings touching on county and state history, and the history of the American West. Since Mr. Madden is an expert in both history and music, we anticipate a variety of topics to fill his column.

In this issue he reviews **Inez Long Fortt's** "Early Days at the University of Oregon," and **Olga Freeman's** "A Guide to Early Oregon Churches. Both authors, we are proud to say, are Lane County Historical Society members -- Mrs. Fortt, of course, recently retired from her distinguished role as Historian editor. Madden also reviews **Nancie Peacocke Fadeley's** "Mission To Oregon," still another local publication adding to the store of state and local history.

**Eggert Madsen** has published and exhibited his photography locally, nationally, and internationally. His fine photos of Captain John Sutter's gold watch and Eugene Skinner's letters accompanied the October 9 story in the Eugene Register-Guard ("SUTTER'S Gold") The story -- and additional transcriptions of Skinner's letters, are included in this issue.

**Mrs. Leta Burrell** will whet our appetites each issue with a special recipe from pioneer collections. Since this issue arrives before Christmas, she has selected an old Christmas Chess Pie for a possible menu treat. She appreciates any suggestions coming from our readers of unusual food preparations from the Oregon past.

\*I give special thanks for the writing and advice of **Mrs. Hallie Hills Huntington**, the L.C.H.S. president; to **Glen Mason**, who will provide reports each issue on a few of the many contributions to the Pioneer Museum; to Jan Brown for news stories on recent construction projects in the area that directly affect history and historical preservation;

And we extend our thanks as well for the typesetting by **Doreen Potterf**; photo processing by John Brooks; for magazine printing (through a generous arrangement) by **Don and Wendy Fast's Insta-Print**; for the illustration (on back cover) by **Jerry Williams**; and for the front cover Historian signature design by **J. Paul Dusseault of Industrial Litho**.

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## LANE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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### **Remembering . . . and reflecting on the Armory**

Great excitement and keen anticipation prevailed on the important day in Eugene's history, some 61 years ago, when the handsome new armory was to be dedicated. Its architecture was acclaimed and its beauty admired.

The occasion was sufficiently important to bring the Governor of Oregon from Salem to participate in the dedication. The City Band played, soldiers marched, the roads to Eugene were crowded with hacks and buggies and lunches were eaten in Hitching Post Square. A couple of important "runaways" occurred when country teams met with the new fangled automobiles!

What a day to remember!

Glowing words marked the occasion and the small city swelled with pride, as it was agreed the spacious, new armory would meet all needs for the next century! Many and varied were the uses of this imposing edifice: public and private dances, road shows, receptions for dignitaries, home talent shows, (and even boxing and wrestling) adding to the measured tread of many young feet, as they drilled.

Double important were the building's added functions when we entered World War I. Its broad front steps saw many tearful embraces, as our youth marched bravely away to make the world safe for all people, with wars ended for all time! War work occupied the Armory rooms, where miles of bandages were rolled by anxious mothers and sweethearts.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor at the start of WW II, the Filter Center was manned by scores of volunteers who identified all aircraft (friend or foe) and plotted their courses. A certain dashing young captain in charge of operation, caused many feminine hearts to flutter.

More than 60 years of constant service entitles this useful, old building to a few separations in its sturdy brick walls. Should it be called "progress" to demolish this landmark, when its replacement can be counted upon to be another drab, gray stack of concrete, piled up with no attempt at anything resembling beauty?

The Armory was no Taj Mahal, but it was a fine, old red-brick that boasted a white trim like a lady's collar. It was admired by many who strove valiantly to save it from the wrecker's ball.

We say "Good Bye" with sincere regret. The grand old building deserves a better fate.

*Hallie Hills Huntington,*

### **Help others remember the old Armory**

Did you work in the Filter Center during World War II? :

Do you remember the wrestling matches in the Armory?

Can you describe the earliest days of the old Armory, and do you have clippings, photographs, or diary entries from your own collection or know of such collections?

The Lane County Historian is anxious to collect and preserve the anecdotal history of the old red-brick building, and asks for your help -- we want stories about people and events. When we have enough material of interest to our readers we expect to prepare a special issue on the building and the people who used its rooms.

Please contact us through mail, or phone a member of the Historical Society, or phone me. Perhaps you can write your own memoir for us -- we'll help if you ask.

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Perhaps the Romans wouldn't have been surprised, but to the folks of Lost Creek Valley in 1921 the Flume was pretty outlandish.

Roman aqueducts carried water from mountains to cities in Italy; the Mt. June Flume Company transported logs from the hills to the mills.

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## **THE LATE, GREAT, MT. JUNE FLUME COMPANY**

by Jerold Williams

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The road serving Lost Creek Valley in southeast Lane County had changed little since settlement in the 1850's.

Like a great many Western Oregon valleys, Lost Creek was stocked with a magnificent stand of Douglas Fir. Neither the pioneers nor their immediate descendants were much impressed by that timber. It was a nuisance to be cleared off level ground for farms and ignored on the hills.

By 1920, however, the thick woods looked like a valuable raw material. The big problem was a means of getting logs and lumber out of the valley to a profitable market. There had been sawmilling since settlement, but it was purely local, cutting lumber for fencing, barns and houses for the farmer-operator and his farmer neighbors. One of the earliest mills was operated by my great-grandfather Thomas Williams at his claim on Rattlesnake Road around 1868.

The early mills were water powered sash mills with a very small capacity. Their timber supply extended only as far as horses could conveniently skid logs to the mill. But World War I and the boom period following it created demand and prices that made logging remote valleys a good proposition. The obstacle was transportation. Road hauling was feasible only where the roads were reasonably good. Lost Creek Road had not yet seen crushed gravel, and it was up to the residents to throw a little river-run rock into the worst morasses from time to time.

There was some speculation that a railroad spur might be built, and some survey work

## **Jack Godman and A. L. Shaffler had a plan**

was even done. The solution however came unexpectedly.

Jack Godman, who lived half a mile up the old Lost Creek Road from Dexter was a self-taught carpenter-engineer. He had received his experience in Ohio, where he had been employed in various construction enterprises. He incubated his idea for a flume. He talked to his friend A. L. Shaffler and in 1921 the two believers managed to recruit six other men who became partners in the Mt. June Flume Company: Jack Godman; A. L. Shaffler; Darwin Yoran; Clarence Whitten; a Mr. Wetherbee; a Mr. Koke; Ernest Hyland and Henry Mathews. Some of the partners, like Darwin Yoran, postmaster of Eugene, supplied only capital, while others like A. L. Shaffler supplied labor and enthusiasm, and enthusiasm proved to be a valuable commodity.

Agreement was reached with the newly built Hyland Mill at Zion and the Hills Mill (later known as "Wilson Mill") on Anthony Creek to supply construction lumber. Securing right-of-way was the usual long difficult process (the proposition was even sweetened a little by the company's offer to permit irrigation from the flume for those who granted right of way). One time failure to secure a right-of-way from a farmer just below Zion resulted in a lawsuit that nearly foundered the infant company.

The construction of the flume demonstrated Godman's engineering talents. Using an early version of pre-fabrication the builders floated prepared sections down the portion of the flume that had been completed. The new section was added on, and yet another section was sent down to be added, and so on.

**Starting in 1921 the work was completed by 1923. The distance covered, from Zion to Pengra was 7½ miles. It was a remarkable feat for rough and ready engineers to carry out a project of that size with a consistent fall achieving a full head of water moving at a regular rate of 4½ miles per hour. The maximum height of the flume was 40 feet, as it crossed the Willamette River at Pengra.**

The river seemed an overwhelming obstacle to the crew, but never daunted, Godman was sure he could span it. They proceeded as they had on dry land, building out and bracing as they went. The crew received a grand ducking when a large section of the bridge gracefully yielded to the current and collapsed. Ralph Mauney was cutting wood just upstream and hearing a great crash, rowed down to find the builders laughing as they floundered ashore. After seeing Godman still optimistic the crew tried again with a new tactic. Stringing cables across the river that would ultimately support the span, the builders tied the bridge to the cables as they proceeded across. Once across, the flume descended until it reached the slough that held the lumber until it went into the planing mill, and then onto railroad cars.

The last crumbling remnant of the flume is the descending section. It can be seen just below Dexter Dam along a nature trail constructed by Lowell Public Schools.

The flume company proved to be under financed and over

## **The last of the Flume stands near Dexter Dam**

**Flume Walkers  
rested in 'Dog  
Houses,' guided  
logs with  
'Pickaroons'**

optimistic. The mills that it served did not produce as much lumber as expected, and there wasn't enough money to pay the bills and make a profit. During these first years Bob Shaffler, son of partner A.L. Shaffler, was practically the whole operating crew.

A change in the fortunes of Lost Valley sawmilling came in the person of Eugene A. Lewis. Known generally as "Ol' man Lewis," he came to Oregon from Los Angeles to manage his father's timber interests in Tillamook County. After gaining considerable lumbering experience he bought the mill at Zion, thereafter known as the Lewis mill. In the same year, 1923, the immigrant Giustina brothers bought a struggling sawmill a mile upstream.

Lewis and the Giustina brothers were very capable and imaginative timbermen who steadily increased annual cuts. E. A. Lewis soon moved to take over the flume from the ailing company. He had an ambitious plan for a planing mill at the Pengra railhead, fed by lumber from the Zion end. The movement of logs to the sawmill was on an extensive plank truck road that Lewis insisted be kept to railroad grade, hoping someday to convert to locomotives. Well known for thrift, he frequently lamented on the losses he was suffering. A mill hand commented: "Either Ol' man Lewis had a lot of money before he came here or he is a damn liar."

A fine stand of timber was on the route of his plank road, but rather than pay the outlandish sum of \$3.50 per thousand he made a long detour around it.

The Giustina brothers first tried road hauling, but found the road too rough. They negotiated a tie-in to the flume. Three shippers used the flume and identified their respective lumber with these chalked marks: Lewis - "O", Giustina - "S", Wilson - "X." These symbols were probably chosen because they could be scrawled on at great speed.

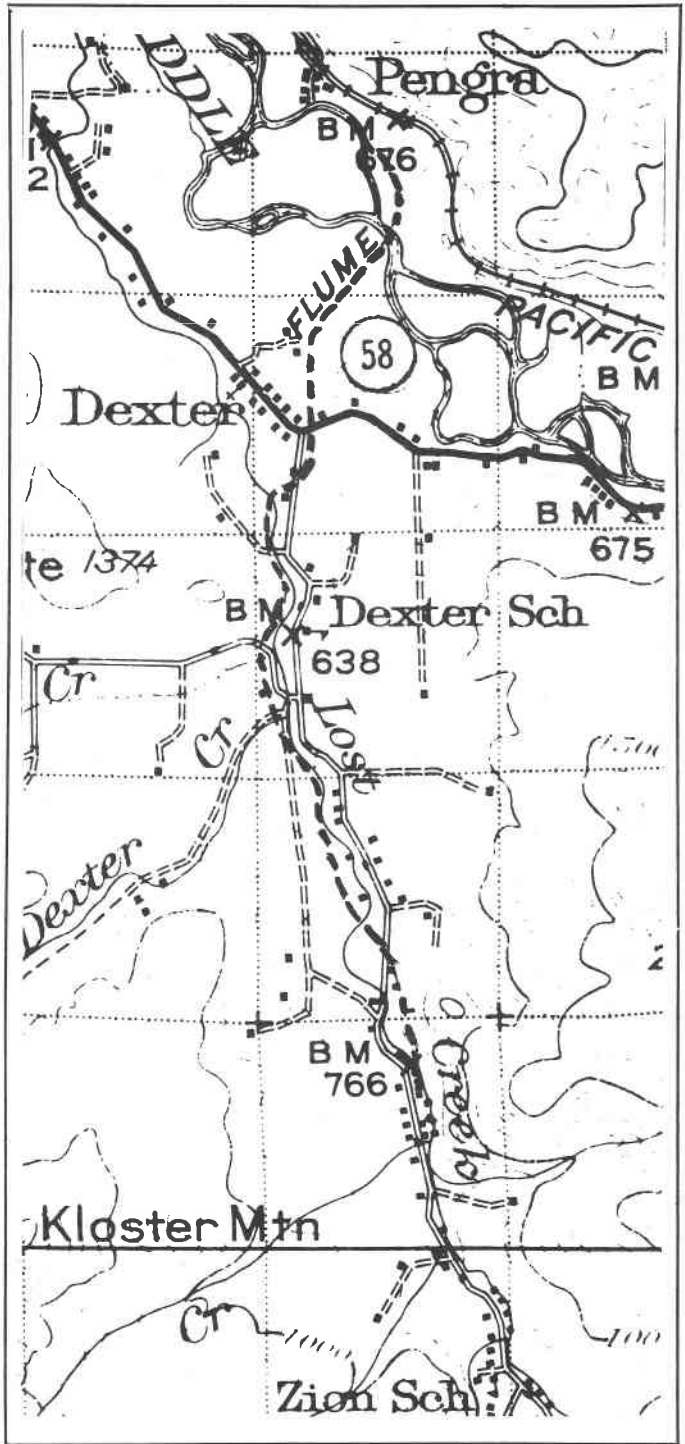
A greater volume of traffic demanded a carefully worked out operation. A foreman or "flume boss" directed a crew of five "walkers" and a two man repair crew. Many men served as flume walkers, but they had one thing in common, youth. Pete Kuiper, flume boss for nine years, says that only the young could stick it out. Starting in 1930 at a magnificent \$1.60 a day Kuiper earned a dime more a day than his crew.

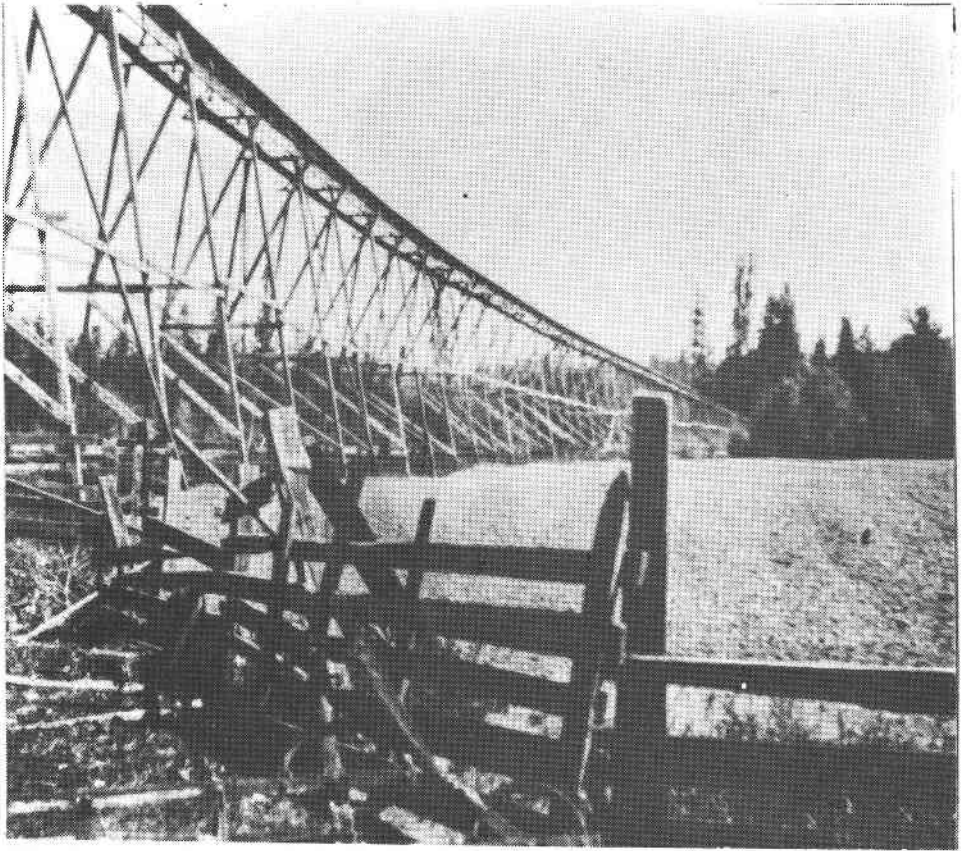
Each walker was assigned a section of a little more than a mile. Patrolling his section on the perilously narrow catwalk, the walker freed any jam-up that occurred. In quiet moments the walker had a "dog house" to shelter in. The quiet moments were often interrupted by a telephone call to race off to another jam-up. The flume boss was assigned the "large" central dog house at Dexter. In keeping with the size of his dog house the boss doubled as telephone operator for the whole lumber-logging operation.

The telephone system had private subscribers as well, who often listened in to whatever was going on. The flume boss had to ask the party line regulars to hang up while he made a connection. The magneto telephone needed all the power he could crank into it to reach out to the next caller.

**Moving logs from Zion to Pengra, the great Flume traversed 7½ miles, soared to 40 feet at its zenith when it crossed the Willamette River**

USGS, 1942 Edition, Lowell Quadrangle





The Flume passing over A. L. Shaffler farm, two miles south of Dexter.

The maximum height is about 25 feet at this point [1931].

*Bob Shaffler Collection*

**The Flume peaked at 150,000 board feet per day**

Pete Kuiper and his walkers had a candid view of life beneath their caulk boots. Carrying his rifle during hunting season on the chance of seeing a deer Pete made a lucky shot and downed a goose circling near the flume one foggy day. The goose spiraled down and landed right smack in a wash tub. The good housewife using the tub fetched the goose out without so much as a look for who her benefactor might be. In those depression days a gift like that was welcome whatever the source.

Volume on the flume reached about 150 thousand board feet a day at peak operation. Large timbers were sent down by themselves, with additional water to aid their passage. Big "stringers" or beams, as large as 24 feet long by 8 by 16 inches needed special handling as they tended to hang up on the curves.

The "V" shaped flume sometimes made it necessary for a walker to hold them upright with a peavy to take advantage of the 26 inch center depth. Smaller dimension lumber jammed up too; alas, the walker came on the run with his "pickaroon" (an axe-like tool with a sharp pointed hook end). Speed was



## **Young Boys rode the Flume for fun**

essential as the more lumber in a jam the harder it was to untangle.

The bridge over the Willamette was a critical point. A jam there weighed down the bridge dangerously as the lumber dammed the flow and increased water depth at that point. The walker furiously yanked lumber out every which way, letting it land where it might. Downriver residents garnered a good bit of free lumber. Residents beneath dry land jam-up points also came in for building supplies. E. A. Lewis expected the walkers to haul up the thrown off lumber in quiet moments. The walkers, to Lewis' thrifty consternation, often managed to postpone that chore to Saturday when they earned time and a half.

I remember other flume bonuses: Long icicles formed in winter on the flume bottom; they produced ice cream before electricity and refrigerators came to the valley. The forbidden pleasure of perilous rides on floating big timbers is a happy boyhood memory.

One jam-up led to the only fatality on the flume. Twenty-two year old flume walker Eugene Parker was killed by a fall



**Flume walker Roy  
Bauguess at  
Lewis Mill  
Doghouse, 1938**

*Roy Bauguess Collection*

## **One Flume Walker lost his life**

on May 19, 1933. Fellow walker Loren Clayton found Parker about an hour after the accident, killed by striking a support timber as he fell. It is likely that Parker stuck his pickaroon probably didn't hold and the pulling motion carried him over backwards. The Register-Guard reported that Parker fell at a spot "fully 50 feet high." The reporter was misled, as the fatal spot was a mile below the Lewis mill where the height couldn't have been much more than 10 feet.

In the summer of 1937 a spectacular accident occurred which was indelibly impressed on all who witnessed it. On the quiet Monday evening of July 27th, flume boss Pete Kuiper had just stepped off the flume at the end of a long day. A sudden and ominous crack was heard all up and down the valley, and a mile and a half of flume fell like a row of dominoes.

The flume was braced against the flow of water and when for some unexplained reason it was suddenly severed near the Pengra end it collapsed upstream. The collapse halted at the point opposite Dexter School where the flume met ground level.

Highway 58 was blocked at Dexter for several hours by debris. The fourth Oregon Trail Pageant had just been celebrated that weekend in Eugene, and along with the flume collapse provided Lost Creek folks plenty to talk about for months to come. Rebuilding was started at once, with sawyer Henry Mathews, one of the flume company partners, pressed into service as a leadman.

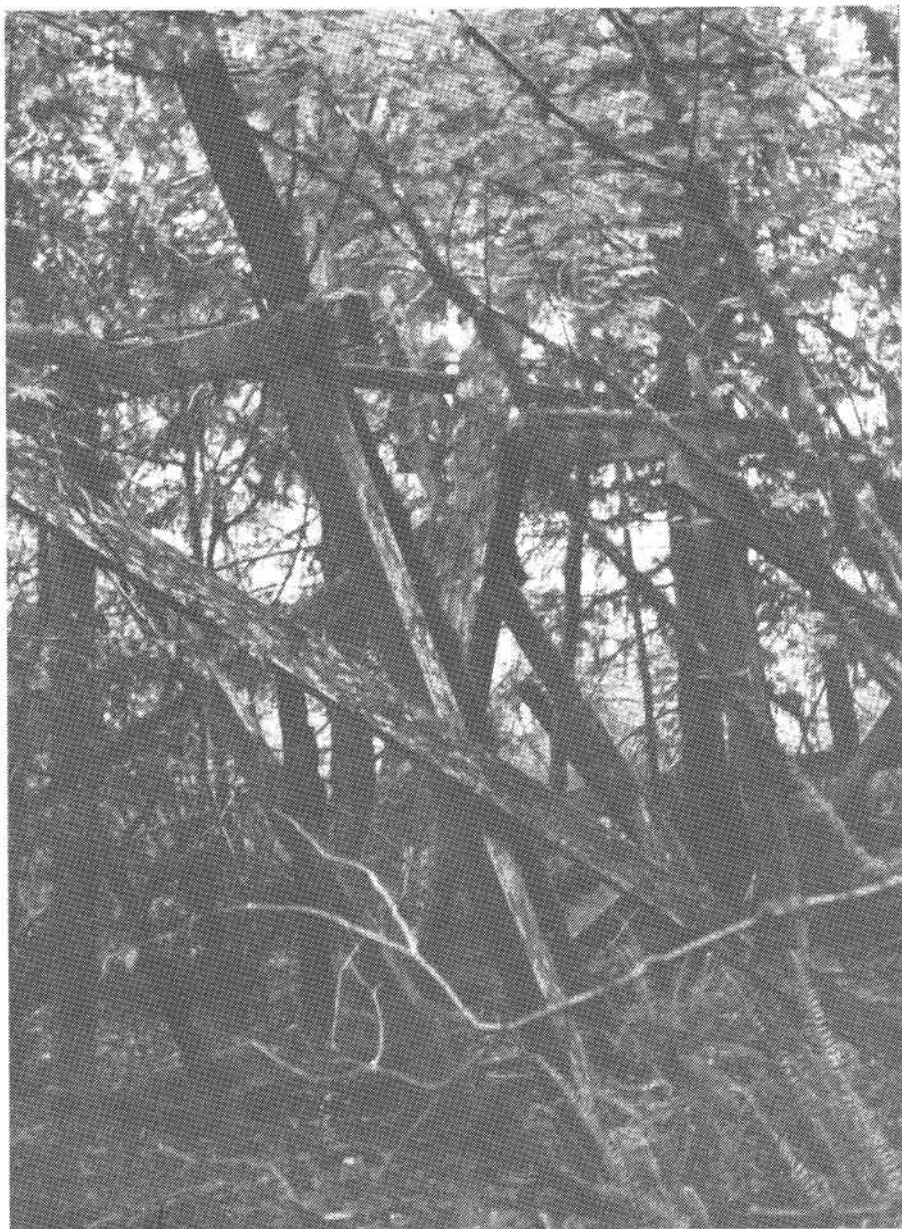
Help was collected from all directions, including some itinerant laborers from Minnesota. These men were mightily impressed by Ruth Parker's peach orchard, an exotic fruit to them. When the repairs were completed the peaches disappeared with the Minnesotans. E. A. Lewis was so pleased at the speedy restoration that he hauled down a truck load of strong drink for the crew to celebrate.

After the depth of the depression Lost Creek Road was considerably improved. The Giustina brothers cancelled their flume shipping and engaged Roy Clark to haul their lumber by truck. Clark's fleet of Model A Ford trucks quickly gained a reputation that gave them clear right-of-way. The "high-balling" drivers were paid by the load, and they took most of the road. At one dollar per thousand board feet charge the Giustina brothers had their lumber hauled cheaper and faster than the flume could.

Maintenance costs on the flume increased as the structure aged. The best timber in the valley was being cut out. Circumstances were pointing to the end of the transportation innovation of 1921. It was the death of E. A. Lewis just before World War II that marked the beginning of the end. Jack Lewis, his son, didn't have the same enthusiasm for the operation, and when the New Year flood of 1942 struck he folded the mill and the flume.

A double crest of 16.7 feet at Eugene took out the flume bridge at Pengra, closing an era of lumber transportation.

## **'High-Balling' Drivers raced for payloads, and brought on a new era of log transportation**



**The last remnants of the great flume. This 1976 photograph was taken near Pengra, on the north bank of the river, just below the Dexter Dam.** *Jerold Williams Collection*

**A gold watch believed to have been sold by Captain John Sutter to Eugene Skinner, and four letters written in 1860 in Skinner's own hand, tell us more about . . .**

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*By Pete Peterson*

*Photography by Eggert Madsen*

# Skinner's Eugene

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Sometimes the most entertaining and most romantic stories about Skinner and his family are undocumented, but rooted in an actual event or registered in someone else's family record. There's a popular story about an "Indian Raid" on the lone log cabin on the butte, and one about Skinner's dealings with Captain John Sutter in California.

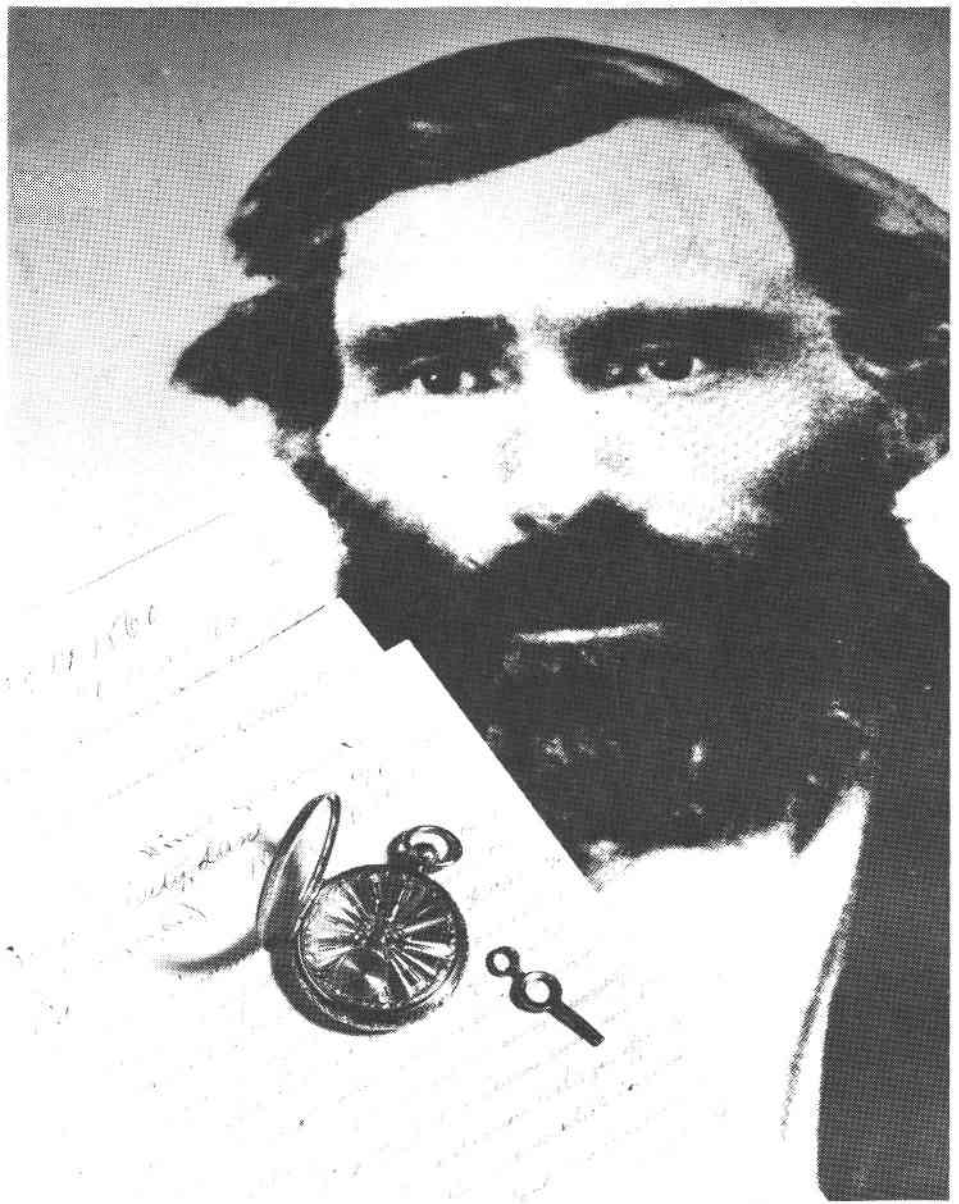
The Lane County Historical Society acquired two items this summer which add both documentation and the possibility of more speculation to these two stories, and to several other incidents as well. Yes, Skinner's little town grew very fast -- even he was surprised.

In a special meeting on October 10 in Harris Hall the Society displayed a gracefully engraved gold watch once owned by Eugene Skinner, and four

personal letters in Skinner's hand, written in 1860, four years before his death.

The antique pocket watch was donated by Mr. and Mrs. John Huber of Eugene, who have owned the timepiece since 1963 when they purchased it from jeweler W. W. Bristow, Sr. Mrs. Rose Huber officially presented the watch to the society and received the society's grateful applause.

Along with the watch itself, the Hubers presented to the historical society (and through the society, to the Lane County Pioneer Museum) affidavits that tie the glass and 18 karat gold watch to Captain John Sutter, founder of Sutter's Mills and Fort Sutter, where in 1848 gold specks were discovered in a nearby stream which led to the grandest gold rush in world history.



*Photo by Eggert Madsen*

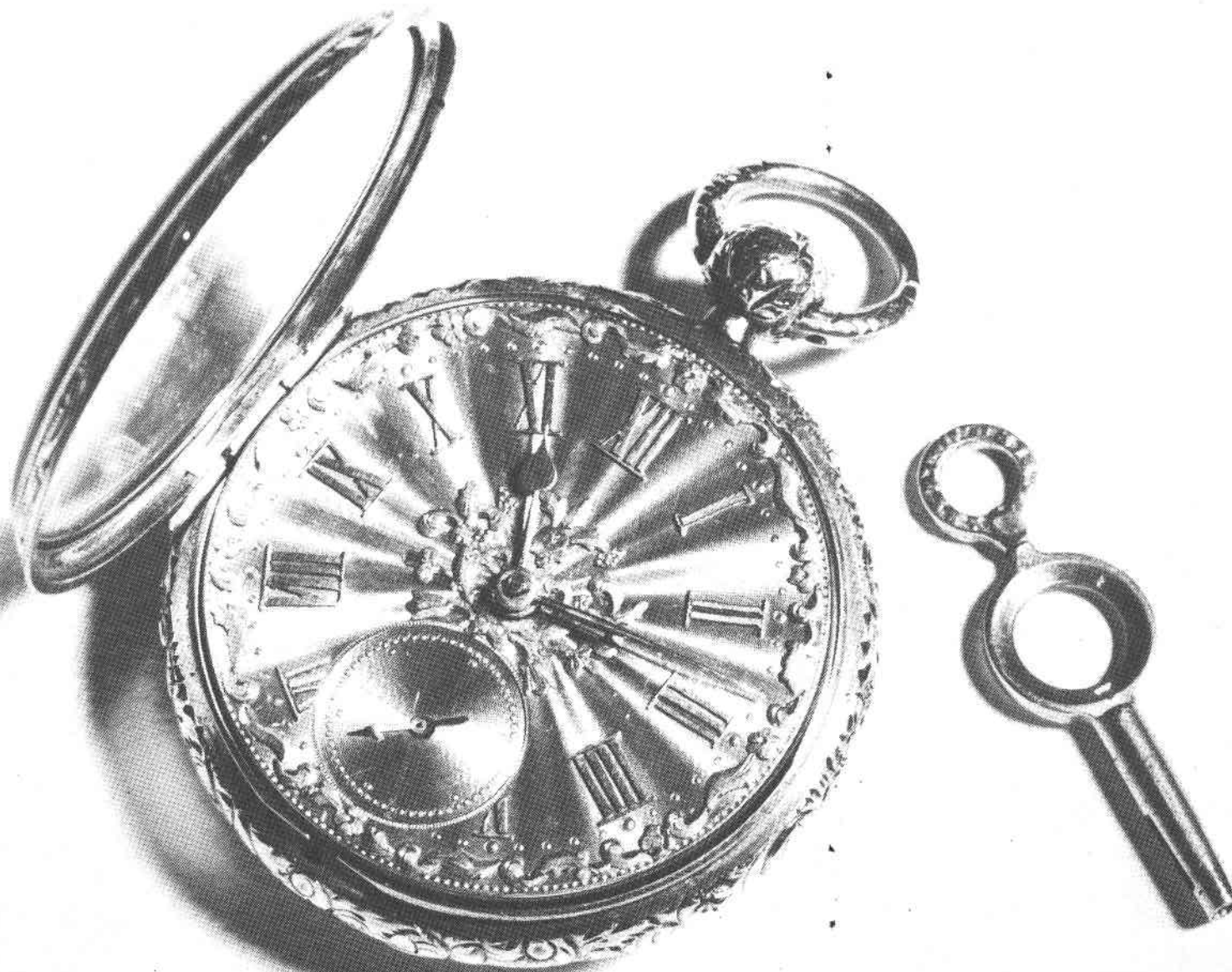
**John and Rose Huber donated a gold watch to the Lane County Historical Society this summer. Accompanying the watch are affidavits which support the otherwise undocumented claim that the watch was at one time owned by Captain John Sutter, on whose land gold was discovered in 1848. The documents say that Sutter sold the watch to Eugene F. Skinner, founder of Eugene. Letters written by Skinner to his sister Phebe in 1860 are the gift of Miss Amy Hutcheson of New Westminster, British Columbia, granddaughter of Phoebe B. Skinner Brock. The Society is grateful to these generous donors.**

**“My Mother, Sarah Jane Stevens, came to Oregon with her parents in 1847 . . . My Father, George Henry Armitage, came to Oregon in 1848.**

**Eugene Skinner and his Wife were present at the wedding of my Father and Mother near Eugene on November 25, 1851.**

**One of my childhood recollections is of the many conversations between my parents and their friends about the wonderful watch worn by Eugene Skinner at the Wedding of my Parents.”**

*Frank L. Armitage*



*Photo by Eggert Madsen*

## **The Skinner's wintered at Fort Sutter in 1845-46**

Eugene and Mary Skinner traveled to the Willamette Valley and stayed in Dallas, in Polk County, while Eugene scanned the area for a suitable land claim.

Not content with the Polk County area, Skinner, along with Elijah Bristow, Captain Felix Scott, and William Dodson, came back up the valley in June. The three companions chose the beautiful area which they named Pleasant Hill, but Skinner, tending to be a loner, wandered north again and seemed impressed with the view and surrounding flat land below the hill the natives called Ya-po-ah. Records show that he moved Mary and their infant daughter to a small cabin on this butte in 1847.

Mr. and Mrs. Huber tried to find out more about the possible second visit Skinner paid to Sutter's fort. And Mr. Huber, intrigued by Sutter's Swiss origins, discovered more details about Sutter's emigration to North America.

The story is easy to tie together, easy to recreate in one's imagination. But missing links in the story's documentation will provide the skeptics room enough for pesky questions (but will also provide unrestrained romantics with the stuff for wonderful speculation).

One affidavit accompanying the watch, signed by E. E. Orton in 1932 when he sold the watch to Julius Toman, jeweler, states that "Captain John Sutter of Sutters (c.q.) Mill owned gold watch English Fusse and sold it to Eugene Skinner and Mr. Sutter offered to buy it back for \$300 but Mr. Skinner would not sell it back. Mr. Skinner came up to Oregon after visit to California and broke watch chain and sold it to Mr. Alfred Orton in about 1850 to 1855. His Son now E. E. Orton aged 71 years has sold it to J. M. Toman on this date."

Skinner had wintered at Fort Sutter in 1845-46. He did know John Sutter. There is evidence that the two were on very good terms. But neither Skinner nor Sutter ever made a written reference to this private sale. Even Sutter's famous "New Helvetia Diary," recording the daily events at his California colony, fails to mention a gold pocket watch when noting business with Skinner. We do have these references:

**October 25th, 1845: ". . . 4 wagons more came in today -- Mr. Ide's and Mr. Skinner's."**

**October 31: ". . . Skinner and Tusten were shingling the Hatterhsop."**

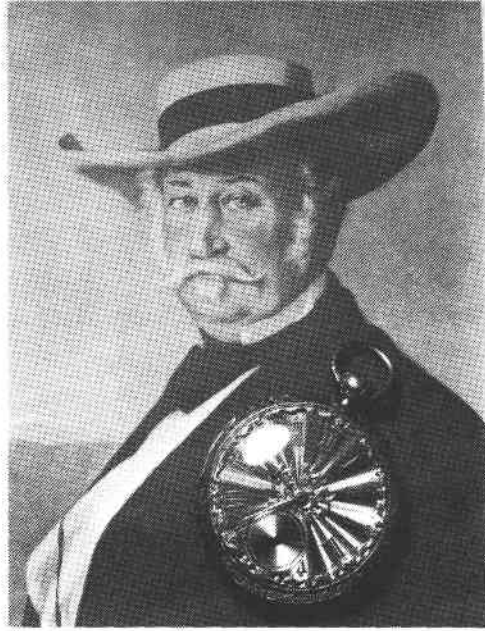
**December 5th: ". . . Skinner hung the door to the Cooper shop . . ."**

**December 8th: ". . . Skinner finished frame to grindstone."**

**April 10th, 1846: ". . . Departed . . . E. F. Skinner & family, and E. Dupeis for the Valley above."**

Huber speculates that Sutter bought the watch in London while en route to the United States in 1834. His query to the





**Captain John Sutter**

*John & Rosa Huber Collection*

## **Sutter came from Switzerland**

Horological Section (specializing in the study of timepieces) of the London Chamber of Commerce revealed that the odds are great that a watch operating by a key winding mechanism and a tiny chain drive (similar to a miniature bicycle chain) was assembled by the Maurice Tobias & Company of Dock Yard, Wapping, London between 1794 and 1840.

Sutter, it turns out, came from a village in Switzerland just 30 kilometers from Huber's own birthplace.

Sutter traveled from New York, presumably with his watch, westward to St. Louis, Missouri. He traded with trappers and other explorers for three years before sailing to Vancouver in 1838. Unable to secure passage directly to California, he sailed to the Sandwich Islands and then eventually to California.

He sought fortune. He secured a huge land grant from Governon Alvarado in the Sacramento Valley, became a Mexican citizen, and labeled his kingdom New Helvetia.

Skinner, and also Elijah Bristow, were among the many cross country travelers to seek winter refuge with Sutter. The Captain wanted American citizens to help him colonize the area since he sensed that the territory would be of interest to the United States one day. He didn't expect the rush of 1849.

And, evidently, Eugene Skinner preferred to colonize his own territory.

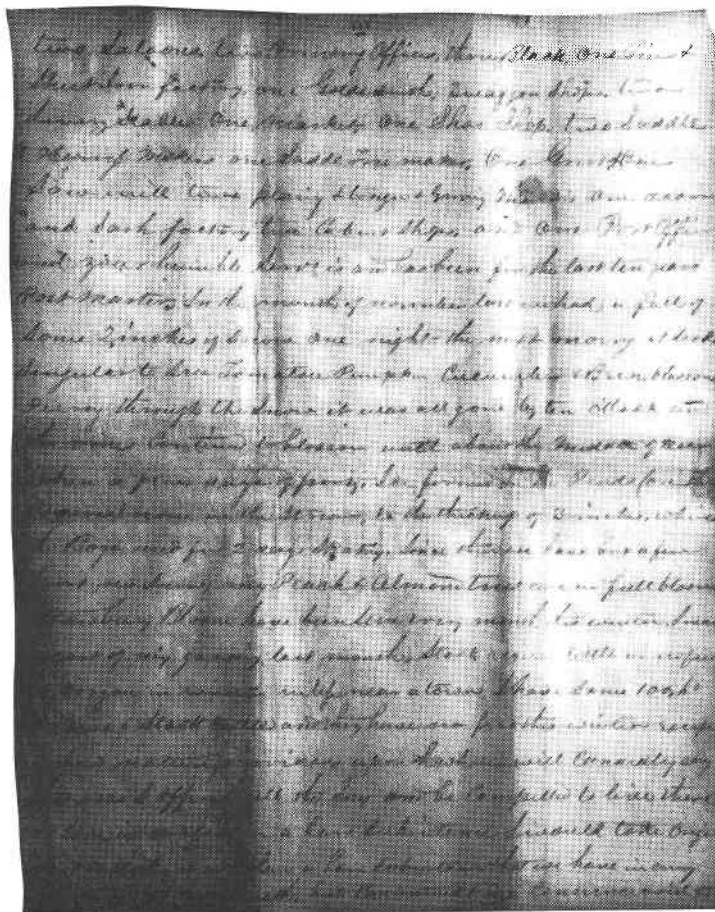


The newly acquired letters tell us why the man stayed in rainy Oregon. Writing to his sister Phebe in Vankleet, Western Canada on March 18, 19, and 20, 1860 (in three letters sent as one) Skinner boasts of "The beautiful scenes which surround us in Oregon . . . the land of enchantment . . ." and explains that "the Country is new, we have no aristocracy and no high style of living. Still we enjoy life full as well as those who roll in luxuries."

The letters have been preserved in his sister's family for over 116 years and are now the donation of Miss Amy M. Hutcheson of New Westminster, British Columbia, the granddaughter of Phoebe B. Skinner Brock -- Eugene Skinner's sister. They will ultimately find their way to the Pioneer Museum.

Eugene doesn't mention a gold pocket watch. He admits he is financially comfortable by 1860, but the transcription of one letter also reveals his destitute state upon arrival in the Oregon Territory.

### A page from the old letter



**Skinner's letters  
to his sister  
in Canada  
told her about  
the 'far-off West'**

My Dear Sister

March 18, 1860

Yesterday evenings mail brot a long and welcome letter from you of date of Jany 20th 1860. . . It is now some 12 years since I have had the pleasure of getting a letter from you direct, before the one last evening. . . you are a Stranger to this far off west and those that inhabit it, and the beautiful scenes which surround us in Oregon but could you but see our land of enchantment — & we could be once more together in this Country, we would try to live our childhood days over again and I still hope to see you and our brother in this country yet: the trip is not a long one nor very expensive, and then I think that was you and your kind companion in this Country you could make a good living

Though the Country is new, we have no aristocracy and no high style of living Still we enjoy life as well as those who roll in luxuries. My Dear wifes health for a few years past has not been of the best, but she has passed that critical period in woman and she is now . . . well and becoming Stout & hearty. She is 46 years old as for our children theyno nothing of Sickness They are all verry larger of their ages. Mary is as tall as I am & will outweigh me The next Leanora is more slender. Phebe is robust and is as much like the original in our younger days. St. John is said to by all to be as Smart as the Smartest. Amilia soon will be five years old & I think the Smartest of them all. The four older are going to School, as this place there is a Cumberland Presbyterian College, a primmarie School, and a high school. The high school building is on my claim a little over ¼ mile from our house, the professor is an excellent man a Graduate from Dublin College. I made the arrangement for him to teach for 5 years from first of December last, and am in hopes that my children will by that time have acquired a good education Mary, beside the usual English, is studying French. I intend to have her as well the ballance to thuraly understand Mathematics She as well as St. John are quite good in figures. Leanora is more dull, Phebe wont work Spends her time in reading Our school has about 50 students many of them young women an. . . from 18 to 25 years. The District school ¼ mile from our house has some 60 to 80 s children mostly small. The College 1½ miles from our house has some 80 to 100 students Our little town has from 900 to 1000 inhabitants, One Episcopal Church, One Old School Presbyterian one. . . and one Methodist Meeting House, 8 stores, 2 drug stores, two Hotel two Saloons, twoPrinting Offices, three Black, one tin & sheet Iron factory, one Goldsmith, 3 Waggon Shops, two Livery Stables One market, one Shoe Shop, two Saddle & Hemp makers one Saddle tree maker, One Grist & One Saw mill . . . One door and Sash factory two Cabint Shops, and one

**Eugene City's  
businesses  
Blacksmiths,  
Saddle Tree  
makers,  
Merchants**

**Snow covered  
the pumpkins  
and beans**

*Post Office and your humble Servant has been for the last ten years Post Master. In the month of november last we had a full of some 2 inches of snow one night — the next morning it looked Irregular to see Tomato Pumpkin Cucumbers & Bean blossoms Peering through the Snow it was all gone by ten o'clock and the vine Continued to blossom until about the middle of Dec. . . . Ice formed on the Ponds. . . none in the stream, to the thickness of 3 inches which the boys used for skating. . . my Peach & Almond trees are in full bloom Strawberry Bloom have been seen every month this winter. . . . Stock require little or no feed in Oregon in winter unless near a town. I have some 100 h of cows & stock cattle and they have no feed this winter except what nature provides, upon the whole will candidly say that was I offered all ---and be Compelled to live there or live oregon on a bare subsistance I would take Oregon as it is nothing more than a bare subsistance that we have in any country, tis not wealth, but Contentment and a Conscience clear of offence that makes the sum total of this life I am tolerable well off in property. Suppose my property is worth farr from all uncumberence about \$2000.00 probably I owne \$300.00 I have an expensive family but a very equnomical wife I buy every thing that I eat & --- dont farm any not able have the asthma very bad at times getting old, wont expect to Stay long in world and when I leave would like to have a clean balanced sheet for the wife & children. .*

He closes the letter politely after four pages, but evidently by the next day rescued the envelope from his own post office to add a few more notes on his children's music lessons and to narrate some of his journeys as a young man in the midwest into Texas.

*March 19, 1860*

*. . . . I hope to be able to give my Children not only a good English Education but also a good Musical Education. I don't care about leaving them money or any great amount — you know when I left Keansburg in the fall of 1829 for Texas I had but \$50 and that \$50.00 was all that I had to make the journey of 3000 miles. I have honestly made a living since and once after moving to Illinois made a Second trip to Texas on horseback and when I married had but ten dollars to my name and my wife had ten dollars less in my stock in trade, four years hard work made my outfit for Oregon and when I paid my ferrage across Cow River this side of Indepence I had a five cent piece left and that was the money either of us had We left the Oregon Road at Ft Hall and went to Cal. on the road*

**California on  
the South,  
Hong Kong  
on the West**

*Mary made \$14 making shirts, we wintered at Suters Fort I sold my team for 12½ and got \$280 less cash what we earned together with the sale of my wagon got horses and in api  
1846 Started for Oregon packing and were 30 days between Houses in an Indian Country took this claim 640 acres upon which Eugene City stands, in July, 1846 had a cabin built & 20 acres of wheat sown and on the — May 1847 moved my wife and Child Mary then 5 mo old, into our new home in the far off west, 45 miles to the first neighbor on the North 450 miles on the South, China Hong Kong or Pekin on the west Missouri on the East, and for 4 month less 3 days Mary never saw the face of White woman or child except our own & 5 months before we had a neighbor nyther than Stated above I had 3 cows + calves 9 horses, having given the others for work 6 pigs 1 Hog, doz chicks one cat 1 dog and .44 cents in Cash, and once I was compelled to leave my wife and little one alone whilst I went in Search of flour the nearest mill being 80 miles. I was gone 6 nights and the Country full of Indians some days there would be 100 Indians at our house and once Mary & myself stood a charge from 60 for about an hour until I sent a little Indian girl after some friendly Indian who were prompt to come to the rescue. . . .*

Opening the letter a third time and writing in looser penmanship he adds more news of the west and invites his sister and her husband to visit.

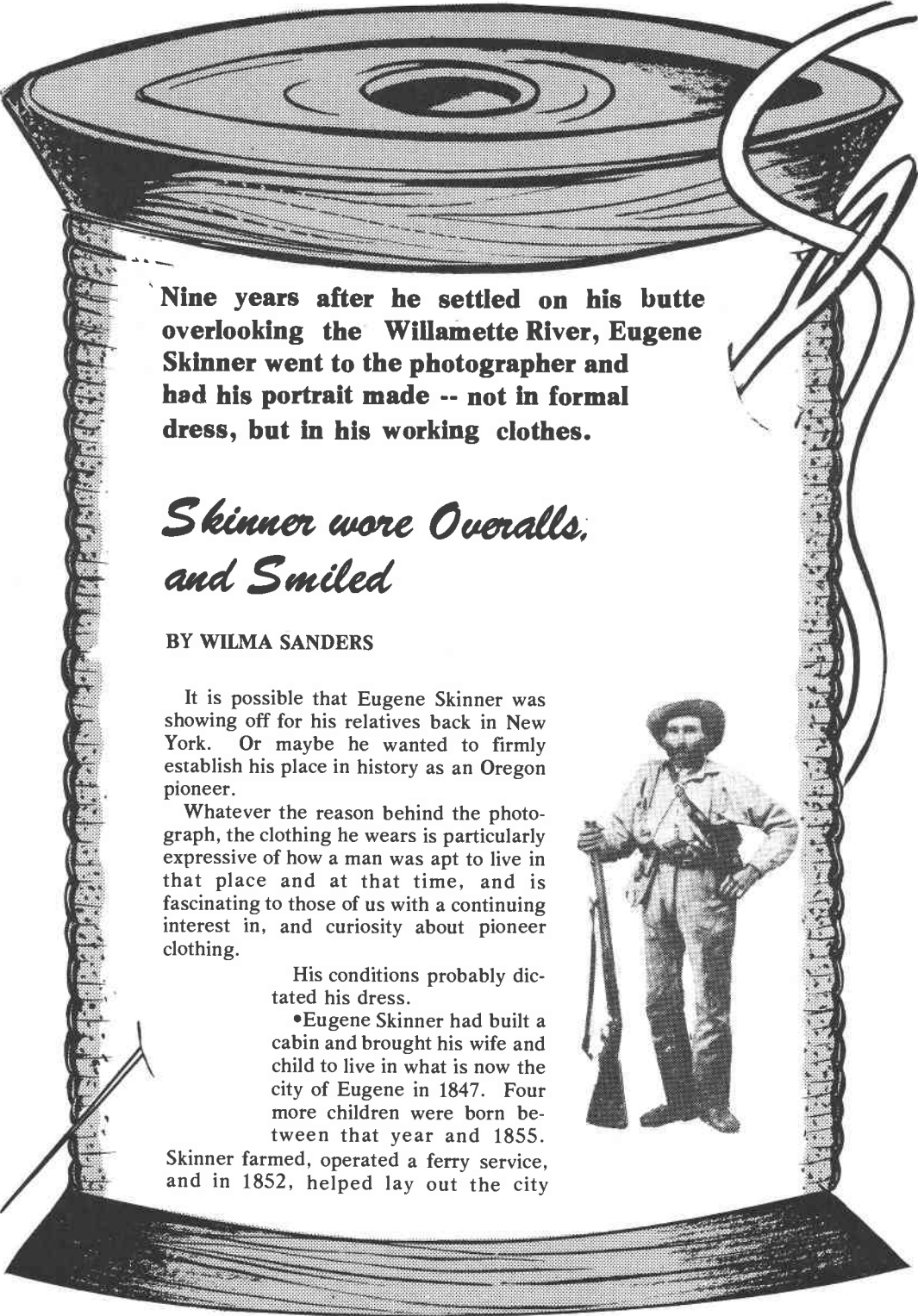
A fourth letter, dated July 27, 1860, reports that his wife Mary is "worn out with constant toil." To remedy the fatigue, which Skinner says comes from 12 years of very hard work, he proposes to embark on a trip for the ". . . pleasure of visiting many old friends and acquaintances in Cal . . ."

Perhaps Skinner could have purchased the pocket watch on this visit if, indeed, he and Mary did travel south to Sutter's fort.

"Harvest is abundant in Oregon this year," he tells his sister in the closing lines. "Think that after harvest wheat may be bot at 37½ cts per bush and oats at from 20 to 25. Cattle are very low money scarce no news of Importance."

The unpretentious signature signs-off the last piece of correspondence we have from the city's founder. Other records held in the Pioneer Museum relate some of his business transactions and his public service roles.

Skinner noted that his asthma was still giving him discomfort. Records also note the fact that after swimming in the river during the great winter flood of 1861, Skinner was never well again. We can speculate he died of pneumonia in 1864, at the age of 55.



**Nine years after he settled on his butte overlooking the Willamette River, Eugene Skinner went to the photographer and had his portrait made -- not in formal dress, but in his working clothes.**

## *Skinner wore Overalls, and Smiled*

BY WILMA SANDERS

It is possible that Eugene Skinner was showing off for his relatives back in New York. Or maybe he wanted to firmly establish his place in history as an Oregon pioneer.

Whatever the reason behind the photograph, the clothing he wears is particularly expressive of how a man was apt to live in that place and at that time, and is fascinating to those of us with a continuing interest in, and curiosity about pioneer clothing.

His conditions probably dictated his dress.

•Eugene Skinner had built a cabin and brought his wife and child to live in what is now the city of Eugene in 1847. Four more children were born between that year and 1855.

Skinner farmed, operated a ferry service, and in 1852, helped lay out the city



of Eugene. The following year he donated a portion of his property for the city.

•In the latter part of the 1840's, the settlement was known as Skinner's Mud-hole. It had damp climate much of the year.

•This man was farming; with no neighbors to pool labor and his own children too young to help, it must have been slow, hard work. It is probable that most of the food for his family came from farm produce and woods animals.

•He was also operating a ferry service, perhaps keeping watch for the occasional customer while working in his fields.

•It is reported, too, that some Indians did not care for his appropriation of their land and that it was frequently necessary to drive them off.

This picture, then, is a portrait of a man who worked out-of-doors and in the mud of field and riverbank. His clothing was probably made at home, from materials hard come by, and so were few and undoubtedly had to last as long as possible. Skinner wears shirt and trousers of a fairly heavy fabric.

### **HIS SHIRT**

The shirt appears, from the fold patterns, to be of wool, possibly fortified with linen in a fabric called linsey-woolsey a combination favored by the settlers for its durability and insulating qualities.

In the year 1855, ready-made clothing and fabrics were available in the Portland area, and it is possible that this shirt was purchased from a local maker or made from purchased fabric which had either been imported from the East or made in another part of Oregon. Whatever the source of the raw material, the design suggests that the garment was cut to use the fabric to the fullest degree, leaving barely a quilt scrap.

It is a shirt for working, cut with room for shoulder movement in a T-shape: That is, the body of the shirt is essentially square, with the sleeves being attached at right angles, rather than set in, as in current fashions (note the dropped should line). This method of construction allowed the durable selvage edges to be used at the side and armhole seams, and minimized ravelling at points of wear. The shirt collar

was not merely a finishing touch, but a means of protecting the back of the neck from wind and rain.

### **REVERSABLE PANTS**

Apparent patches on the trousers suggest that these were cut the same, front and back, and intended to be reversed when seat or knees showed signs of wear. This pair appears to have reached the second phase.

The drape of the fabric about the knees suggests buckskin, which would have been a logical and practical choice of material. Given two well-tanned deer hides, a sewer could fashion a pair of trousers with no outside seams at all. Inner leg seams and crotch seams could secure a serviceable pair of leather trousers in a short time compared to that consumed using cloth, which required finished edges, and which were not nearly so durable.

This type of trouser was simply pulled on, folded or gathered at the waistline, and anchored by belt and suspenders. And suspenders certainly appeared to be necessary, considering the weight of the gun tucked into the belt.

### **MANLY FOOTWEAR**

By 1855, shoe-leather and finished boots were available in Oregon. A decade earlier obtaining adequate footwear was extremely difficult, but Eugene Skinner seems to have acquired a respectably well-made pair that would "take" a polish . . . perhaps lamp-black and grease helped remove traces of Oregon mud. The photograph is indistinct, but the lines of the boot suggest a heel high enough to hold a stirrup, but broad enough for walking.

The socks worn under the boots were almost certainly hand-knit, possibly by Skinner's wife. If knit socks were not available, lengths of cloth might have been wound about the feet for protection from chafing.

### **HIS FELT HAT**

The broad-brimmed hat appears to be of felt, and of a style that was worn by outdoorsmen in almost all parts of the United States. It was probably shipped from the East: A reminder that travel between Eugene City and the major ports in Oregon was becoming somewhat easier.

So many hats were lost by settlers on the trip West, that the demand for new ones was constant. This pictured hat was a practical one, shading the eyes in bright weather and keeping moisture from the back of the neck during the rainy season.

#### **AN ACCESSORIES BAG [PARFLECHE]**

Around his shoulder and under his left arm, Skinner is wearing a container for such items as he might find necessary in his daily or emergency routines. Placed high enough not to interfere with his pistol-butt, but convenient to the right hand, its practicality gives an air of authenticity to all his accessories. The bag appears to be made of tanned leather. Fur trappers wore these made of rawhide, and frequently called them by the name of the Indian product--"parfleche."

In this bag, Skinner may have carried any item that might otherwise have been placed in pockets or knapsack--bullets for his gun, whetstone, or food.

#### **HIS WEAPONS**

The sheathed knife, apparently fastened to the belt, is safeguarded from loss by

being anchored to the shoulder-strap, suggesting its importance in the life of a self-sufficient man of that time.

The gun in the waistband appears more convenient than comfortable. It is possible that this was a frequently-worn accessory, but not necessarily carried on every outing.

The rifle (identified by a non-authority as "an old Sharps") accompanied by the hand-gun indicates a degree of danger in daily life, as well as a means of providing food for the family table.

And so, why, one day in 1855, in his forty-sixth year, did Eugene Skinner travel to a photographic studio to record himself in his working clothes? There seems to be no accompanying picture of his wife to indicate family record. Was it to preserve an image of himself as a man, formerly in poor health, now able to manage his own life in a raw country, or was it to let people of his own time and the future understand that these details of dress were part of pioneer living, that clothing was not easily obtained, and each item of dress must be compatible with supply/and purpose?

## Museum Notes

Pioneer Museum curator, Loretta Conger, is actively seeking out materials to fill the gaps in the museum's artifact collection. Two areas of concentration during this Bicentennial year are the acquisition of artifacts brought across the plains to Lane County in the 1840's and 1850's and objects used in Lane County those first few years of pioneer settlement.

Mr. and Mrs. Lynn McCready recently responded with two very appropriate donations: Fireplace tongs brought to Lane County in 1847 by the Mitchell Wilkins family, and a clock purchased locally in the 1850's.

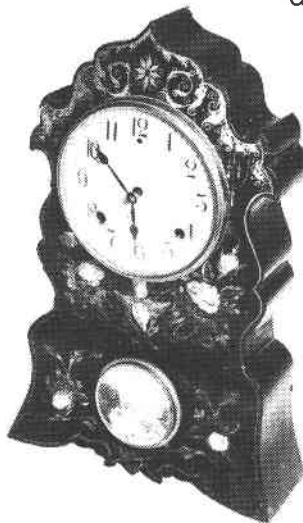
The clock, a Session's mantle clock, is decorated with gold leaf design and mother-of-pearl inlay (see photo). It was purchased by Mitchell Wilkins in Springfield sometime in the mid-1850's. It is quite possible the family purchased the clock during a trip to the Springfield flour mill to have their grain ground.

The museum's textile collection is becoming quite well known throughout the West Coast. A recent addition to

this fine collection was a blue and white woven coverlet made by Mrs. Johnathan Nies, grandmother of Frank Chambers and great grandmother of the donor, Mary Chambers Brockelbank.

Frank Chambers came to Oregon in 1885 and to Eugene in 1887.

*Glen Mason*



# Historic Buildings

## New Pioneer Museum a possibility

by *Jan Brown*

If a \$2.4 million federal grant is approved, Lane County Pioneer Museum will have a new facility in the planned Alton Baker Park cultural complex.

The proposed 25,000 square foot building would be located among the trees near the southwest corner of the complex. The present building, adjacent to the fairgrounds on 13th Street, covers 1,400 square feet.

Lane County has allocated the \$18,000 necessary to complete the program and schematics for the proposed building. Glenn Mason, museum director, says he should know within 60 days if the grant has been approved.

Although Mason admits the chance of receiving the Public Works money is

slim, he emphasized that the county, by allocating the money to plan the proposed facility, has made a definite commitment to a new museum.

### Historic wall display

A Wall of History, drawing items from local museums, will be one of the artistic displays in the new Lane County Public Service building.

The county is presently negotiating with a Portland designer, Willard Martin, for a wall design.

About \$110,000 or 1.5 per cent of the direct construction cost for the building has been earmarked for art. This represents the largest amount of money spent for any single item in the building.

*Jan Brown*

## BOOKS ETC.

### *Mission to Oregon*

by Nancie Peacocke Fadeley,  
Eugene, Oregon

**Mission to Oregon**, by Nancie Peacocke Fadeley, is a short booklet of twenty-six pages devoted to recounting the work of Oregon missionary Jason Lee.

It contains a half dozen photographs of the book's principals and several drawings used to close sections of the work. There is no documentation or bibliography included.

Ms. Fadeley's work is by no means a complete study of Jason Lee or of Oregon Methodism, rather, a very readable introduction to the man and his mission.

Lee's Oregon calling seemed to be one of perpetual justification a wary mission board; of efforts to found a lasting settlement, evidenced by his pleas for pioneers skilled in the trades rather than men of the cloth; and of his struggle to establish his own family life. In all, his Oregon calling was of short

duration, lasting about 12 years, including several month long journeys to the eastern mission board to plead his cause.

She, at one point, includes a gentle plea when speaking of the site of Lee's mission:

"unmarked as yet, the site seems waiting for United Methodists to take the initiative to see that that historic spot is in some appropriate way recognized." (p. 10)

Besides the story of Jason Lee, one can glimpse viewpoints of the writer at times and her love of Oregon is evident.

"The Willamette Greenway, an ambitious attempt by the people of Oregon to preserve the health, beauty, and historical significance of a great river." (p. 10)

Perhaps a short bibliography would have been an appropriate addition to Ms. Fadeley's work, although there is no shortage of materials about early Oregon. **Mission to Oregon** is one more laudable example of local history written by Oregonians about Oregon subjects -- a most worthwhile trend that all of us should support. *Milt Madden*



# BOOKS ETC.

*Early Days at the University of Oregon*, by Inez Long Fortt, Eugene, \$5.50

Inez Long Fortt, in her **Early Days at the University of Oregon**, has written a charming portrayal of the school's pioneering founders and of the early students and faculty. The volume is a 60 page paperback with over 30 photographs and 19 chapters ranging in length from one to six pages.

The chapters are concerned with students, faculty, traditions, athletics, and campus buildings. The book is chronological in its approach but Mrs. Fortt did not hesitate to pursue her materials topically if necessary.

Her style is brief and the general lack of extraneous words is appreciated by this reviewer. She has a ready eye for anecdotal material which paints a picture of the era covered by the scope of her work, which is, roughly, the years between the establishment of the University in 1872 through the turn of the century.

Victorian Deady Hall, on the University campus, may rate second looks from the reader who finds that the floor was double and "inlaid with dirt, wheat and stubble, to deaden sound," and that, "barring accidents, the building was guaranteed to stand 1,000 years."

Three coeds shouted for help from one of the windows one dark night in 1876 when they were mistakenly locked inside. Twenty three years later they might have found themselves in the Deady Hall assembly room which was then being used as a men's gymnasium.

Today's suffering citizen may enjoy reading that a measure of bureaucratic bumbling was present when the University of Oregon built a small observatory on "the east crown of Skinner's Butte" in 1888. School officials discovered (a)

it was so far from campus that students couldn't work the necessary travel time into their schedules, (b) "there were few clear nights for telescope study," and (c) someone had stolen the telescope. They evacuated the building and it became a hobo refuge. One's curiosity is whetted by a seeming inference of official collusion in the desire for the removal of the observatory "without cost to the university" and the subsequent explosion and fire which soon after reduced it to "a heap of stone and broken mortar."

The photographs included seem to have been found in the University archives and they are a joy to behold. Shining but carefully posed students faces, buildings on the treeless campus, and patriarchal benefactors beam from the brown-toned prints.

Of primary importance in this work, is the picture drawn of the community--students, faculty members, and townspeople: The University professor who would hide his cigar behind his back when meeting students on the street, forgetting the betraying curl of smoke rising from behind him; the large cat, with "his tail securely taped" to a tin kettle, thrown over a transom of a dorm room; the awful disappearance of a sophomore's date in to the black mud beneath a rotten boardwalk (it evidently ended their relationship).

And there are other stories: One of the best is of Eugene City's indignant cries when the second University President requested a bathtub for his residence (a request which was refused by the Board of Regents). He then purchased a tub with his own money and stirred community outrage when he resigned and left--taking his bathtub with him.

One reason to purchase "Early Days" is its emphasis on human beings. The proliferation of books such as this, can help kindle interest and pride in Oregon communities.

Milton Madden

# BOOKS ETC.

*A Guide to Early Oregon Churches* by Olga Samuelson Freeman, Eugene, \$5.50

"**A Guide to Early Oregon Churches**" is, according to author Olga Samuelson Freeman, an account of "how ten denominations established churches of their faith prior to Oregon's statehood in 1859."

It is paperbound and contains 88 pages, including a chapter for each religious group, 41 photographs, and over 50 entries in a bibliography.

Each section introduces the denomination with a short sketch of its history in Oregon. This includes information about individuals and events important to the history of that particular sect.

Often comments concerning present furnishings, their immediate surrounds, and their physical appearance are included. In every instance a picture of the past or present edifice situated on the location in question is included.

Mrs. Freeman's style is very read-

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The most definitive study of the famous "Lost Wagon Train" episode of 1853 will be chronicled in a four-part series in the Oregon Historical Quarterly. Researcher Leah Collins Menefee, an honorary director of the Lane County Historical Society, has invested almost 20 years in the project.

She informs us that the first installment is scheduled for the December issue of the Quarterly. The valuable by-products of her Wagon Train research can be found in the files of the Pioneer Museum, in the pages of the Historian, and in countless family geneological collections throughout the state. The Historical Society congratulates her on her accomplishment, and thanks her for her several contributions to this county's historical records.

able. The facts together with a skillful use of anecdotal material will maintain the reader's interest.

Inspirational quotes or comments often conclude each individual church section.

"The church stands today as an eloquent reminder of the faith and vision of those early devout Christians." (p. 64)

The Unitarians can be justly proud of their usefulness to mankind." (p. 76)

This reviewer found himself wishing for a rudimentary map showing the approximate locations of the various houses of worship.

The importance of Mrs. Freeman's book can be found in the Preface."

"No written work exists in which this material is brought together." After reading this volume it would be difficult to pass by a church mentioned in the book without making an effort to stop or to mark its location for a future visit.

In summation, an important heritage of history, religion, and architecture has been brought to our attention in a pleasing manner in this work, **A Guide to Early Oregon Churches.**"

*Milt Madden*

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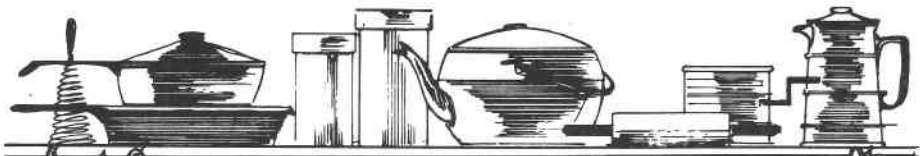
"**A Piece of the Old Tent,**" a new catalog of items in the Lane County Pioneer Museum brought across the plains prior to 1860, is on sale at the museum.

Edited by Museum Director Glen Mason, it is complemented by Andy Whipple's photographs -- many in vivid color.

Concentric Conceptions of Eugene designed the publication to serve as a readable reference manual and absorbing pictorial narrative of the items our ancestors chose to carry all the way home from the East and Midwest.

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We read in the Register-Guard of Ernie Drapela's "new" old book, **1897 Oregon Bicycle Guide**, a reproduction of a publication originally prepared by the League of American Wheelman. \$4.95



## Chess Pie for Christmas

by Mrs. Leta Burrell

My mother, Della Agee of Albany, used to make Chess Pies when I was a little girl growing up in the country. They're little muffins, really, with a rich filling.

As you see, there are no baking instructions as we now expect in cookbooks -- their wood burning stoves didn't have thermostats or timers.

My mother was three years old when she came to Oregon, and her mother, Mary Ellen Ritter Leedy, came across the country by wagon train in 1853, bringing the recipe and the tradition for Christmas Chess Pie with her

**Ingredients:** Yolks of 3 eggs; 1 whole egg; 2 cups real butter; 1 cup sugar; 1 cup chopped raisins; pie crust dough.

**Instructions:** Separate yolks. Add the whole egg and beat together. Melt the butter and add; then add sugar and stir; add raisins and a "pinch" of salt. Pour into pie crust dough set into muffin tin. Bake in Gem Pan [a muffin tin pan] at 350 or so. Watch carefully; when the top is browned [the eggs may bake through] and the crust is tan, it's ready to enjoy.

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