

— FALL 2016 —

THE AGATE

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Welcome to the Agate #6

Here's Issue #VI of our new-format THE AGATE, the Jefferson County Historical Society's biannual journal of local history—and welcome to it! With this issue, we complete three years of publication, and we are grateful to Tony Ahern and the Madras Pioneer for once again widening our range by sending it out to *Pioneer* subscribers. We have made every effort to make sure that JCHS members who are not *Pioneer* subscribers receive THE AGATE, but if we're missing anybody please let us know. And we're eager to hear from our readers—with criticisms, corrections, suggestions, leads on local history topics we should be covering in future issues.

In this issue, you'll find an important, ground-breaking lead essay by Jane Ahern on early Latino families in Jefferson County, along with photo-features “discovering” an all-but-forgotten Central Oregon transportation site (Trail Crossing) and a geological wonder (Five Craters) that was well-known a hundred years ago, but now unknown. Also in this issue: Historical Society news and doings, and reviews of new books on local and regional history.

Campaign for Westside Community Center and Museum

JCHS members and local museum-lovers generally will be heartened to know that planning for Westside Community Center (in the old high school), with the new JCHS Museum in the South Wing, is advancing toward a vigorous capital campaign in 2017.

With the support and leadership of the Bean Foundation, and input from the Friends of Westside, the Historical Society, Kids Club, and other interested groups, the project has made major progress this past summer, thanks in large part to the work of Lu Cavanaugh, Campaign Manager, and Teresa Hogue, who has been examining financial and business matters for Westside.

Meanwhile, with the project this far along, the JCHS Board is preparing to get down to cases on the design of the new museum. If you'd like to be involved in planning our new showcase, and with setting it up, please contact THE AGATE, or any of our directors.

COVER PHOTO: Burned remnant of Nuñez family's immigration photo taken at the American office in Mexico just before they left Mexico in 1955. Pictured are mother, Juanita; father, Juan; oldest daughter, Maria de Jesus (aka Susie); youngest daughter, Manuela; and Teresa, on left, image mostly burned off in the fire that destroyed the family home.



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The mission of the Society is to research, gather and preserve the history of Jefferson County and Central Oregon for public education through the display of artifacts and archives.

Editor: Jane Ahern
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The Origins of the Latino Community in Jefferson County

By Jane Ahern

In September of 1957, a caravan of cars and trucks full of families rolled around Juniper Butte and into Culver. Riding in the back of a tarp-covered flat-bed truck were Juan and Juanita Nuñez and three of their children: Teresa (11), Manuela (8), and Juanito (1). Their oldest daughter, Susie (17), rode in one of the cars holding her baby brother, Jorge, in her lap. The Nuñezes had moved many times in the previous two years—from San Luis Potosí, Mexico to Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Independence, Oregon—to stay in labor camps and work in the fields, but their days as migrant laborers were coming to a close.

After the potato harvest was completed in late fall 1957, the caravan of workers moved on, perhaps back to Texas to spend the winter months in a shack near the Rio Grande as many of those on “the circuit” did. But the Nuñez family stayed in Culver, thus becoming one of the first Latino families to settle in Jefferson County and live here year-round.

From that nucleus, the Latino population of Jefferson County has grown so much that it amounts to about one-

fifth of our total population (closer to one-third in the cities) and it forms the backbone of our local workforce in agriculture, manufacturing, and the service industry. In our classrooms, it is not unusual for as many as one-half of the children to be Latino and a glance down our main streets reveals a growing number of Latino-owned businesses.

Despite its significant size and indispensable contributions to the local econ-

omy, the Latino community’s history in Jefferson County has gone largely unwritten and unrecorded. Anyone wondering when and how the local Latino community got started and how it grew will find very little information available.

SOME CONTEXT

The same is not true west of the Cascades, where the Latino community was established earlier and where institutions such as our state universities have fostered efforts to document its history. University of Washington professor Erasmo Gamboa has written and edited several books about Latinos in the Pacific Northwest. One, entitled *Nosotros: The Hispanic People of Oregon: Essays and Recollections*, provides a useful summary of Latino history in Oregon beginning with Spanish explorers of the 17th Century, who mostly explored the coast and left behind place names such as Heceta Head and Cape Blanco.

In the mid-1800s, Mexican mule packers were working in Oregon, most notably during the Rogue River War between 1855-56 when

some were hired by the Second Regiment Oregon Mounted Volunteers to carry their food and other supplies. (This is likely the same outfit referenced in Jerry Ramsey’s story “Henry Larcom Abbot in Central Oregon” on page 13 of the spring 2016 issue of THE AGATE.)

By 1869, another set of Latino workers, vaqueros, had spread from California into Eastern Oregon, working for cattle ranchers such as John Devine and Pete French

in the Steens Mountain region. Not immigrants, really, vaqueros had lived and worked in California back when it was part of Mexico.

These early forays into Oregon by explorers, mule packers and vaqueros, while interesting to note, did not result in any significant population of Latinos here. An *Oregon Encyclopedia* article by Jerry Garcia (no, not that Jerry Garcia) entitled “Latinos in Oregon” states that by 1930 still only 1,568 Mexicans or Mexican-Americans lived in Oregon full-time. What finally did bring Latinos to Oregon in greater numbers was the Bracero Program.

The Bracero Program was the result of a bilateral agreement between the United States and Mexico that allowed US employers to hire Mexican men to fulfill short-term contracts. The braceros mostly did farm work, but there was also a bracero program for railroad workers. The program operated nationwide from 1942-1964 and was instituted to alleviate labor shortages during World War II when millions of young men and women were serving in the military or finding better-paying jobs in factories and so were unavailable to work in the fields.

Administered by then-Oregon State College, the Bracero Program in Oregon ran for just four years, from 1943-1947, but still managed to bring in a whopping 15,000 workers. The braceros stayed in labor camps all over the state, harvesting hops in the Willamette Valley, sugar beets in Eastern Oregon, and potatoes in Klamath County, among other crops. According to an Oregon Public Broadcasting production entitled “Oregon Experience: The Braceros,” the braceros made an important contribution to the war effort because the labor shortage was so severe that farmers could not have harvested

their crops without them.

A side-effect of the Bracero Program was that it gave Mexican workers a foothold in Oregon as well as in other states. Now that they were familiar with American agricultural communities and their crops, it was easier for them to return in subsequent years, albeit illegally, and when they returned they sometimes brought their wives and children. They spread the word to their friends and relatives back home in Mexico, with the result that the Latino labor force in Oregon has continued to grow ever since.

The Latino workers who came to Oregon during and after the Bracero Program lived under difficult conditions. Their wages were low, their children did not get adequate education because they moved around so much, their housing was substandard, and the workers had little recourse if their employers treated them unfairly. To address these problems, a support network for migrant workers developed slowly over time. The Portland Archdiocese of the Catholic Church set up a Migrant Ministry in 1955 and hired a Mexican priest, Father Ernesto Bravo, to provide masses in the Willamette Valley. In 1965, the Migrant Ministry, along with other church groups and social activists, established the Valley Migrant League, which secured a \$700,000 federal grant to set up offices in seven counties in the Willamette Valley. According to the *Oregon Encyclopedia* entry "Valley Migrant League" by Kathy Tucker, the VML published a newspaper and offered day care programs, job training, and adult education. In 1974, the VML reorganized and became Oregon Rural Opportunities but

by 1979, federal support for the organization had petered out and it ceased operation.

The VML at its peak was part of El Movimiento, aka the Chicano Movement, which was the Latino civil

and was renamed Colegio Cesar Chavez. Although these institutions had largely faded away by the end of the '70s, they served to forge a community.

EARLY DAYS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

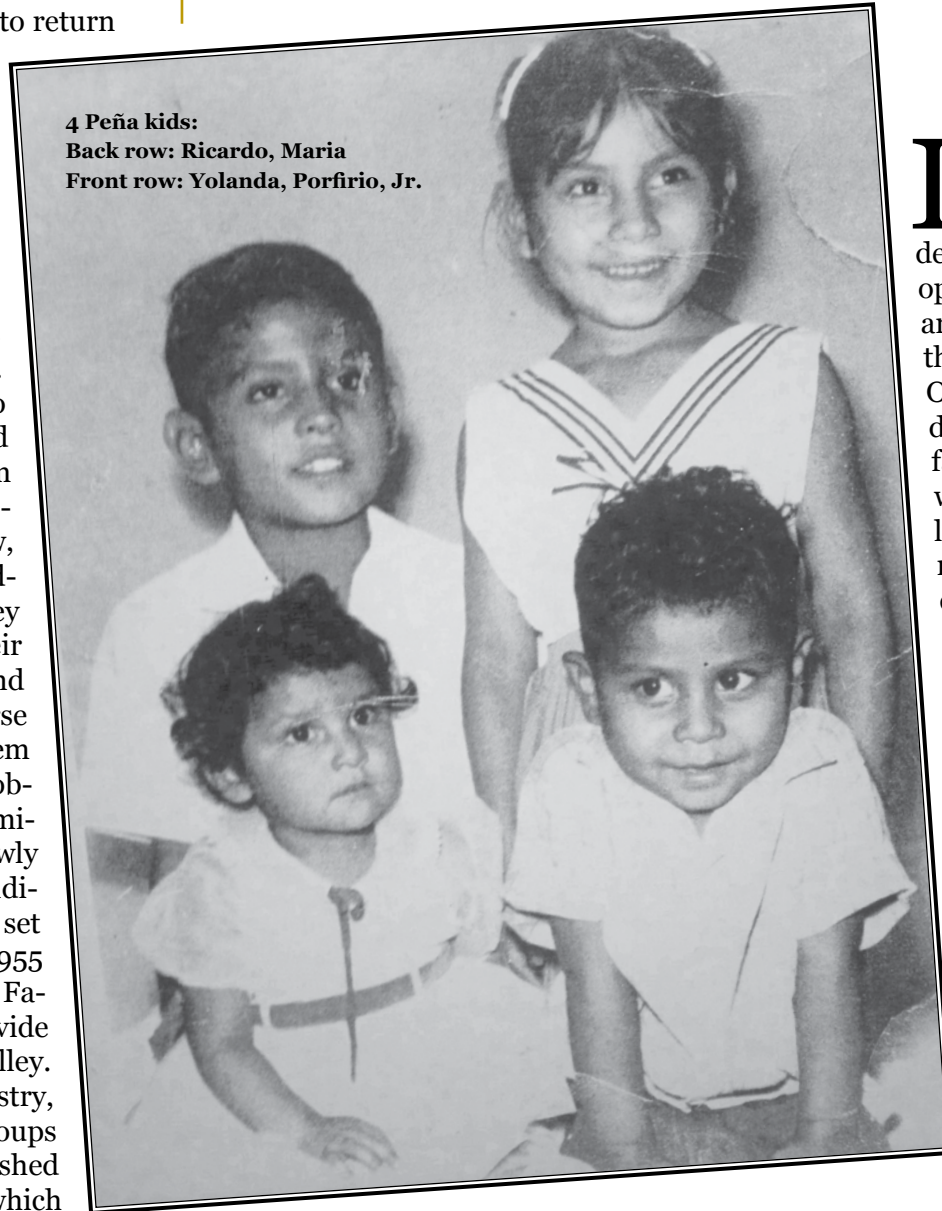
In Jefferson County, the situation was different. There doesn't seem to be any evidence that the Bracero Program operated in Jefferson County and it is easy to see why. When the program was launched in Oregon in 1943, this area still did not have irrigation so the farmers mostly grew dryland wheat. They hired seasonal labor, but not in great enough numbers that they needed braceros. By the time irrigation spread throughout the county from south to north, in 1946-8, the Bracero Program was wrapping up.

But with the irrigation came potato farmers and as the acreage of potatoes in Jefferson County rose, so did the need for workers at harvest time. In those days, the potato harvest was very labor-intensive. The farmers would use machinery to turn over the earth and expose the potatoes and then the workers would have to come along and pick them

up by hand.

Manuela Nuñez Wickham, who came to Culver with her family to work the potato harvest, said, "I remember they had these big belts with hooks on them in the back and in the front. My dad would put like 50 sacks on each hook and one, on hooks, in the front. Then he would bend over and he was like a machine.

4 Peña kids:
Back row: Ricardo, Maria
Front row: Yolanda, Porfirio, Jr.



rights movement of the 1960s and '70s. California labor leader Cesar Chavez organized strikes and demonstrations in the Willamette Valley during those years in an effort to improve wages and working conditions. In Gervais, the Centro Chicano Cultural was established in 1972 and in 1973, Mount Angel College changed hands

He would straddle the row and he would pick those potatoes so fast I would see a cloud of dust behind him.”

Young as she was, Manuela helped her parents harvest potatoes on the weekends. “My dad would take one row and my mom and I would take a row. I would try to imitate my dad, but there was no way I could keep up.” Manuela’s older sister Susie would help harvest too and Teresa, two years older than Manuela, would stay home and take care of their younger brothers.

To fulfill the need for workers, the Central Oregon Potato Growers established a labor camp just outside of Culver. Its residents were mostly, if not all, Latino and typically came over from the Willamette Valley in September after they finished harvesting strawberries, green beans, hops and other crops.

According to both Richard Macy and Tom Kirsch, two of the three remaining members of Central Oregon Potato Growers, the camp served all of Central Oregon. Some of the workers worked on farms near Culver, but others worked on the Agency Plains or even as far away as the Redmond or Prineville areas.

It is frustrating to try to pin down the hard facts about the labor camp—what year it opened, the name of the person who operated it, how many years it operated, how many dwellings there were, etc. Perhaps one reason for this is that the camp was fairly short-lived. It opened in the late 1950s—certainly by 1957 because the Nuñezes lived there that year—and it fell out of use in the mid or late 1960s.

Another reason for the dearth of information about the camp is that most of

the people who remember it today were children at the time and they took note of the kinds of things children notice. Manuela estimates that there were 15-20 small houses at the camp, many of them occupied by families, but perhaps a few were for single men.

According to Manuela, the Culver labor camp housing was on a par with the Willamette Valley labor camps her family had stayed in. “They were small cabins and we just absolutely had fun because the walls had cracks in them and we could see outside when people were coming. And the floors had holes in them so we could get on our bellies and look at all the bugs that were crawling around,” she said.

“All I know is that there was a lot going on, and everybody was making their little food and Mama would send us to get the water because there was an outdoor faucet for the cabins,” Manuela said. There was no indoor plumbing, so outhouses were provided.

Culver residents Mark Hagman and Carolyn Herringshaw both recall the school bus stopping at the labor camp to pick up the students who lived there and both mentioned that the same families would return each year.

“They were migrant all right,” said Hagman, “but their migration was set. We had about 5 or 6 kids in our class and some were there year after year.”

Culver-area farmer Richard Macy estimated that when the migrant families were staying at the labor camp from September to November class size would increase by about 25 percent.

As to how the migrant families were re-

ceived by the community, Hagman said, “The agricultural community was glad to have them.” According to Macy, before the migrant families began coming to the area the Culver schools would shut down for a few weeks during harvest so that farm kids could help.

Still, almost as soon as the labor camp was established, farmers began to acquire new machinery that reduced the need for workers during the potato harvest and led to the camp’s demise. According to Macy, the Central Oregon Potato Growers eventually sold the property the labor camp was on and invested the proceeds in research on potato crop diseases.

However, the closure of the labor camp by no means meant the end of the Latino population in Jefferson County. By the time it closed, several families had jumped off the circuit and found ways of supporting themselves year-round in Jefferson County.

WORK AND WORKING CONDITIONS FOR THE FIRST LATINOS IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

For Latino agricultural workers who wanted to be able to stay year-round in the same place, Central Oregon was attractive because the potato growers needed workers even after the harvest was done. Once picked, the potatoes had to be sorted and packed, a job that could last through the winter. According to Tom Kirsch of Madras Farms, potato packing could even go on into June. After the potato packing wrapped up and



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before the next potato harvest began in September, workers could go over to the Willamette Valley and work the harvests there, thus making a full year of work.

When mint became widespread in Jefferson County in the mid-1960s, it also provided work for Latino families in the spring and summer months. It was very common for the whole family to work together hoeing mint.

While it is true that most Latinos who came to Jefferson County in the 1950s and '60s performed unskilled labor, it is important to note that some Latino agricultural workers arrived in Jefferson County with highly valued skills. One example is Porfirio Peña, Sr. who came to the Madras area with his wife and children in 1964, having acquired a wealth of experience with mint in Central Washington. It is unclear whether Peña had a special title, but he was more than a field worker; he helped oversee the growing operations. The farmers he worked for trusted him to make decisions about the work to be done, the irrigation, and more. "He was a professional grower.

He was very good at raising mint," says the Peña's oldest son, Richard Peña. "He always had the highest oil-producing fields."

The Peñas moved to Jefferson County to work for the Osborns on their farm and later worked for the Brooks, the Vibberts, and Madras Farms. Porfirio was involved in growing potatoes for the Brooks, earning an award in 1965. His children still have the metal plaque, which reads "Spud champ 1965." Measuring about 2" x 3", the plaque appears as though meant to be affixed to a trophy but inexplicably never was.

Talented as he was at growing crops, Peña had always wanted to own his own business. After his service in World War II he had used the GI Bill to get trained in body and fender work and so, in 1967, he opened Peña's Body Shop on the Culver Highway. Unfortunately, the business struggled from the start. For one, thing, Peña allowed friends to use part of his shop for their own body and fender work, thus diminishing his clientele. "Dad had such a big heart. He always wanted to

help people," said Richard Peña.

Peña faced other challenges as well. "The issue with my dad's body and fender business is that usually for any business you have to get a loan and that was one of the big barriers that he had and a lot of people had, being a person of color," said Porfirio Peña, Jr. Both Porfirio, Jr. and Richard speculated that competing businesses played a role in keeping their father from getting what he needed to succeed, perhaps acting in an underhanded way. "He was a good businessman, but he didn't want to fight. He didn't have enough money to fight, to get a lawyer," Richard said. Sadly, Peña had to give up the business after about three years and go back to agricultural work.

Still, the family thinks his might have been the first Latino-owned business in Madras. "It was the only business owned by a Latino at that time," said Richard Peña. "There weren't any Mexican restaurants there at that time that I can remember."

Before, during, and after Porfirio Peña, Sr. had his shop, his wife, Tiburcia, con-



ABOVE PHOTO: Plaque received by Porfirio Peña, Sr.



PHOTO RIGHT: Porfirio Peña, Sr at work.

tinued to do field work and their children worked in the fields on weekends and during the summers. For a time, they worked for a contract foreman, a Latino man who assembled a work crew of as many as 50 people that he hired out to various farmers in return for a cut of their wages. There were a few such contractors operating in Jefferson County in the 1960s and 1970s, but the Peñas could not remember their names. Manuela Wickham and Juan Romero both mentioned the name DuPont and Romero also mentioned a Padilla who was a contractor.

"There were some high school kids out there (meaning Anglos)," Richard Peña says of the work crew. "They couldn't make it the whole day. It was too hot, they'd say 'I don't get paid enough to do this hard work' and they would leave. But we were used to it. Of course, Mom, she would stay and we weren't going anywhere without her. So it was hard work. It was hot and sometimes dangerous because sometimes there were rattlesnakes out there in those fields."

"You had to have the hoe in front of you for scaring the rattlesnakes away," Porfirio, Jr. added.

Despite the sometimes difficult working conditions for Latino farmworkers, the Chicano Movement which roiled California in the 1970s and spread to the Willamette Valley and beyond did not take root in Jefferson County. Porfirio Peña, Jr. was president of the Chicano Student Union at OSU in the 1970s. He said that the organization held small rallies to support farmworkers, but he never knew of any such activity here. He speculated on some reasons: there were still not very many Latino families living here, the crops here were different—grapes were ground zero for the movement—and there was no college here.

"College students can be quite radical. A lot of these movements are started at colleges and they're propagated by the college students because they like to get involved," Peña said.

Another source of work for Latinos was the railroad. Juan Romero, a friend of Manuela's father, Juan Nuñez, helped him get a job working on a four-man crew that maintained a 60-mile stretch of track. Other co-workers included Tony "El Gordo" Torrez and Alfonso Villanueva. Manuela does not remember exactly when her father got the job, but it must have been before 1960 because that's when the railroad transferred him to Bend. He was transferred back to Madras in 1963. "That was a major change for us as a family," Manuela said of her father's railroad job. It was year-round job, it paid better than farm work, and better housing was provided to the railroad workers.

When Romero and Nuñez first began working for the railroad, it was the Spokane, Portland and Seattle (SP&S). In the 1970s, it became the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy (CB&Q) and later still the Burlington Northern. Romero was a section foreman and worked for the railroad for 39 years before retiring.

Local industry provided work opportunities for Latinos and Anglos alike in Jefferson County. According to Bright Wood CEO Dallas Stovall, the mill's workforce remained at or below about 100 employees until an expansion in 1983 brought on another 20 or so workers. Stovall said about a quarter of those were Latino. Since then, the proportion of Latino employees at Bright Wood has grown to about 35-40 percent. The Seaswirl boat factory in Culver and the Gourmet potato processing plant in Metolius were both good sources of employment in the 1970s that helped keep Latinos in Jefferson County year-round, even as demand for workers in agriculture decreased a bit due to mechanization and changes in the kinds of crops grown.

WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE FOR THE FIRST LATINO FAMILIES IN JEFFERSON COUNTY?

As noted above, conditions at the labor camp in Culver were primitive, with no indoor plumbing or electricity. Manuela recalls that there was no kitchen in their little house either, so the family learned to eat sandwiches—bologna on white bread. Still, Manuela and her siblings did not mind much. "For us as little kids, it was just a total adventure."

Of course, the Culver labor camp was not the only place Latino families stayed, whether migrant or year-round residents. According to Manuela and her husband, Jesse David Wickham (who goes by David), there was also farmworker housing along 9th Street on the southern edge of Metolius. "There was a series of small cabins. I think the last of them are gone, but some of the people still live there," David said. The cabins have been replaced by more modern dwellings.

The Wickhams also mentioned a collection of tiny trailers in Metolius that were originally used to house some of the workers who built the nearby dams in the 1950s. It was not a labor camp per se, but the trailers were subsequently used by farm workers. "It was a trailer park for itty-bitty trailers, David clarified. "I think you can still see the cement pads near the mini-storage there."

Manuela's oldest sister Susie lived in one of the trailers with her husband when she was first married. "I remember on Sunday after church we would take Susie a bag of groceries and it was so small that the little bed where they slept, they popped it up and it turned into a table. So we'd put the groceries on the table and we'd just congregate outside the little trailer," Manuela said.

Another housing site for migrant workers was on 8th Street in Madras between

“B” and “C” Streets. That location is now part of Sahalee Park, but long before the street was vacated and the park expanded, there was some housing originally built for Army officers and enlisted men with families who were stationed at the air base during World War II. “It was very common news that if you were seasonal you stayed there,” Manuela said. “I had some girlfriends that were going to high school and living there.” Manuela said a few might decide to stay on after the seasonal work was done, but most would leave. “Because maybe they had an established home in Texas or most likely they would go back because they had their home in Mexico.”

In addition to these group housing sites, Latino families would look for almost any place they could afford to rent while doing seasonal work. Manuela’s family moved several times while her father was doing odd jobs. “We moved to a lot of little places, depending probably on how much the rent was, depending on how much Daddy was making,” Manuela explained. “Essentially, anywhere there was a little old building that could be used temporarily, you found a way to make it work,” David

Wickham added.

Adding to the mix of Latinos in Jefferson County were a few families who moved here from other states. Their families had been Americans for generations, so they had the advantage of being US cit-

Peña. “Dad was going to make sure we weren’t migrants.” According to another son, Porfirio Peña, Jr., the move to Jefferson County was motivated by his father’s desire to advance in his career and improve the family’s circumstances and sure enough, when the Peñas arrived at their new home on the Osborn farm on the Agency Plains, they found a much nicer house than the one they had left in Central Washington.

“This house had an indoor toilet. It had a shower and all the other amenities we never had before. It wasn’t that great, but for us it was ‘what more do we want?’” said Richard Peña.

Within a few years, the Peña family was able to buy a small house on Buff Street in Madras. The whole family worked to earn the money. “One salary could not do anything,” said Porfirio, Jr. “But when you

pool it, you can do something. We paid, if I remember correctly, \$9000 for it, which was more than what it’s worth now,” he added jokingly.

The Vigils were also US citizens, with deep roots in Colorado. They came here by accident, according to Sarah Vigil. Her



Peña family photo with grandkids: Back row is Antonio, Felipe, Diana, Yolanda, Porfirio Jr., Maria, Ricardo. Front row is Maribel, Tiburcia, Angelica, Porfirio Sr., Olga. The young granddaughters are Maria’s kids. Last name Moralez

izens and of being fluent in English. The Peña family is one example. The patriarch, Porfirio Peña, Sr., was born in Texas, had earned a purple heart in World War II, and as noted above was a skilled mint grower. “We weren’t migrant workers,” said Porfirio’s oldest son, Richard



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Jefferson County Water Festival, May 18, 1946

husband, Rudy was on his way to take a job at a mill in Albany when his car broke down in these parts. Rudy stayed with Sarah's brother, who happened to live in Culver, while his car was being repaired and ended up taking a job at the Tallman's mint still. Sarah and their six children moved from Colorado to join him just in time for them to start school in Metolius.

The Vigils soon moved into Madras and all the children graduated from Madras High School. "I always wanted to go back home (to Colorado), but the kids loved it here," Sarah Vigil said. As teenagers they worked at The Buff, the DQ and the gas stations rather than in the fields as so many other Latino teenagers did.

School experiences for the first Latino families in Jefferson County were mixed. Manuela started first grade in Culver, at age 8, a little older than her classmates. She was behind because she was still learning English and she had moved around so much and in fact repeated first grade for the same reason. Nevertheless, Manuela loved school, even earning a perfect attendance award in her first year.

Manuela graduated from Madras High School and went on to attend the University of Oregon, but some of her siblings had a more difficult time in school, due in part to family circumstances, and did not graduate.

"My sister Susie tried to go to school," Manuela said, "but she just couldn't make it. She was too old, she was 15 by then, she had to be in high school and the challenge was she didn't know too much English. And there was peer pressure, you know, she was an out-of-town person, so she just wasn't making it with the youth there. She was very sad and didn't want to go to school, so Dad said, 'okay then, you're going to help me in the field.'" So Susie quit school and worked with her father to support the family.

Manuela's other older sister, Teresa, who was two years older than her, also



BAPTISMAL CELEBRATION AT THE ROMERO HOME IN CULVER. Top Left to Right: George DuPont; a friend, Anselmo; Mr. DuPont-the Godparent of Juanito Nuñez; Juan Nuñez; and Juan Nuñez' closest friend, Juan Romero. LADIES AT THE SAME CELEBRATION. Below Left to Right: Mrs. DuPont; Viola DuPont; Deloris Romero; Maria de Jesus aka Susie Nunez; Anselmo's wife; and Juanita De La Rosa Nuñez.



THE NUÑEZ FAMILY

gave up on school. "She just struggled in school and I think it has to do with brain damage we got when we were hungry," Manuela said, referring to the time before they left Mexico when both of them suffered from malnutrition. Her parents finally allowed Teresa to quit in the 8th grade to help her mother around the house.

The Peña children have happy memories of going to school in Madras. They arrived in spring, near the end of the school year. Their first day, they got on the school bus with the Osborn children. Porfirio, Jr. remembers, "Mrs. Smoot was the bus driver. She was a little lady and she was very, very bubbly, jovial, welcoming. She always made us feel welcome."

Richard Peña was in the 6th grade at Buff Elementary. "I noticed I was the only person of color in that classroom. But the kids were great. The teacher, Mr. Jensen, he was very nice, didn't embarrass me at all." Porfirio, Jr. was in 2nd grade and he said, "What's interesting was, when I first entered my classroom, I was unique. They were super, super welcoming because I was unique."

Manuela felt comfortable and well-received at school, but things were different outside of school. "We almost never mingled with English people," Manuela said. "Not as a family. We always stayed to ourselves." The family socialized instead with Juan Nuñez' Latino co-workers from the railroad and with Latino friends from church or Latino friends they had met working in the fields. The family would occasionally go to dances that were held in the summertime on the Agency Plains, also attended almost exclusively by other Latinos.

When Manuela helped her mother do the shopping in Madras, she noticed that the shopkeepers were not very friendly towards them. Manuela's mother always felt she had to compensate for the family's foreignness by making sure that her children were immaculately dressed, their hair combed, their faces clean.

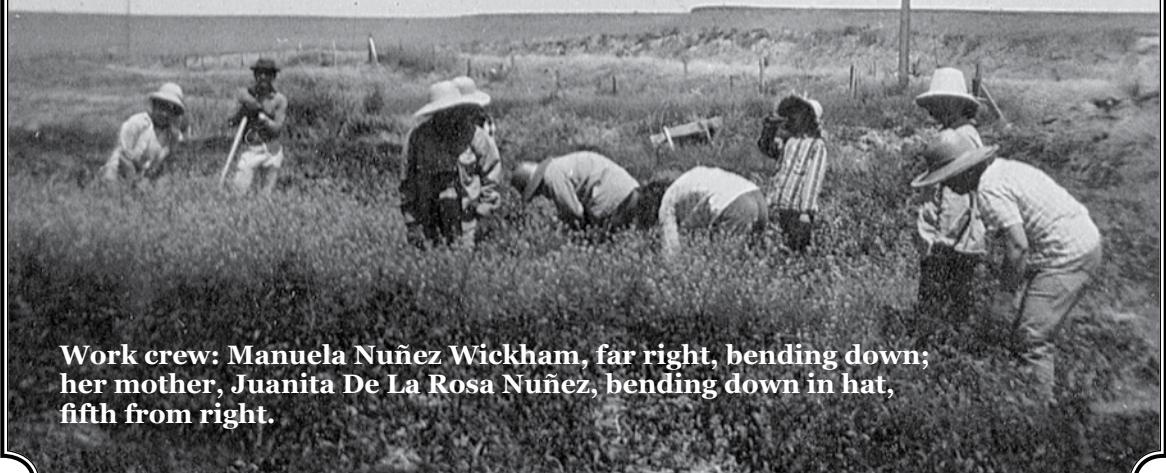
In the accompanying story, Manuela Nuñez Wickham is quoted extensively about her family's experiences as one of the first Latino families to settle in Jefferson County but the quotes only cover a small part of their story. What follows is a more complete portrait, strung together from an extensive interview with Manuela and from Manuela's own writings that she set down for posterity. The Nuñez family story is representative of countless other immigrants to our county but also involves what is still one of the worst tragedies to occur in Jefferson County.

The Nuñez family story begins in a tiny Mexican village called Villa de Ramos, nestled among hills in a dry, barren landscape. At one time the family had a thriving farm, but eventually lost its land in a dispute with a neighbor. In order to survive, Juan Nuñez went with his older brother to work in the United States. The year was 1935 and Juan was 18 years old. In the ensuing years, the brothers returned to the village for visits and on one such visit a young girl in braids caught Juan's eye. A very young girl, indeed-- Juanita De La Rosa was just 14 years old when they married in 1939. By that time, he was 21.

For the next 16 years, the young couple carried on what today would be called a long-distance relationship as Juan continued to work in the United States, sending money back to Juanita and visiting when he could. Juanita gave birth to three daughters and suffered the loss of a set of twins while he was away. He happened to be home on a visit when she lost another set of twin infants. Alone, Juanita raised her daughters in a tiny one-room house using the money Juan sent her to buy flour for tortillas and pay a neighbor girl to do errands for her because custom dictated she must not be seen on the streets alone.

In 1955, Juan was offered an opportunity that changed all their lives profoundly. A Texas rancher wanted to hire Juan on a permanent basis and helped him acquire the necessary documentation to bring the family to the United States legally.

The move was bittersweet for the Nuñez family, Manuela Nuñez Wickham writes, "After all, from the moment nuestra madre helped us, Mela (me, age 6) Teresa, (my sister, age 9) and Maria de Jesus (our oldest sister, aka Susie, age 14) step into the



Work crew: Manuela Nuñez Wickham, far right, bending down; her mother, Juanita De La Rosa Nuñez, bending down in hat, fifth from right.



Tallman Mint fields on the North Agency Plains. Left, Mrs. DuPont; Right, Juanita De La Rosa Nuñez.

bus in our small and poor little village of Villa de Ramos she would never see her brothers or sisters, her father, cousins, and aunts or uncles again! The crying and hugging can still resonate in my memories as a little six ½-year-old. The bus drove my familia away from a life of poverty and uncertainty and the road was taking our life toward the country where nuestro padre had been working away from us for so many years. The United States had given my dad new hope for his little family.”

Almost as soon as the family arrived at their new home in Texas, it was dealt another reversal of fortune. Their sponsor, the kindly rancher who helped them get their legal permission to work in the US, died unexpectedly. Now homeless, the Nuñez family began to migrate and work at seasonal jobs in agriculture.

Without cell phones, social media or the Internet, and lacking even a permanent home with a landline, they figured out where to go by word of mouth. “As men do, they’d get together and talk and give each other ideas and the word came that in Oregon was where the work was,” Manuela recalls. Juan Nuñez and some other men somehow arranged a caravan of cars and trucks to carry several families to the Willamette Valley. They picked strawberries, and green beans and hops through the spring and summer.

Then again, in the aftermath of the tragic fire that killed Manuela’s parents and three of her little brothers, the community—Anglos and Latinos alike—rallied around the remaining siblings. “What the community did back then was just absolutely never to be forgotten,” Manuela said. Attorneys Sumner Rodriguez and George Nielsen managed and safeguarded the donations that flowed in from all over the country. The Lange family—Oscar, Mac, and their daughters Phyllis and Annette—took in all of the Nuñez children, provided them with a place to live, and helped care for the youngest children. Many other people helped them in countless ways.

SUMMARY

The history of the Latino community in Jefferson County seems to divide neatly into two distinct periods. This article has covered the first period, starting in the late 1950s, when the first Latino families began settling in Jefferson County up to about 1980. During this time, the Latino community grew steadily, but very slowly. Census data for Jefferson County before 1980 have proved elusive, but by all accounts, there were only a few Latino families living here during those decades. In 1980, according to the US Census, Only 762 out of 11,599 residents identified as Hispanic.

In those first few decades, most of the first Latino families were drawn to Jefferson County by the prospect of work in agriculture, particularly potatoes. For most, Jefferson County was but one stop on a year-long circuit that started and ended in Mexico or Texas, but a few decided to stay and eke out a living working in the potato sheds, doing odd jobs wherever possible, working the harvest in the Willamette Valley during the summers. Some were lucky enough to get steady, better-paying jobs in industry or with the railroad.

A few Latino families who came to Jefferson County in the 1960s and 1970s moved here from other states such as

Colorado or Texas. Their families had been Americans for generations. As US citizens and speakers of English, they had greater opportunities than some of their Latino counterparts. They became labor contractors, foremen, growers, business owners.

Latino workers were needed and respected for their ability to do the hard jobs, but outside of work the Latino community largely kept to itself, especially the older generation or those who did not speak much English. It was different for the youngsters in school. Latino children were mostly welcomed by teachers and classmates; they learned English, made Anglo friends, and thrived.

Sometime between 1980 and 1990, the Latino community entered into the second period during which its population began to really take off. According to US Census figures, between 1980 and 1990, their number grew to 1,433 Hispanic residents—an 88-percent increase. And the next decade, 1990 to 2000, saw an incredible 133 percent increase in the number of Latino residents. Since then, the population has continued to increase, but at a more moderate pace.

This trend mirrored the state and national trends. According to Pewhispanic.org, which calls itself a “non-partisan fact tank,” immigration from Mexico to the United States peaked in 2000, then dropped off, spiked again in 2005, and then fell precipitously during the Great Recession. In other words, nationally, immigration from Mexico tends to rise when the US economy is strong and fall when the economy is weak and the same appears to be true on the state and local levels.

Statistics are interesting and necessary to understanding our history, but more interesting are how and why the Latino population grew. Even Latinos have expressed astonishment at the growth in Jefferson County’s Latino population. “I’m not totally surprised that there’s a bigger community in Madras, but boy it sure happened pretty fast,” commented

“Mama and Dad were very happy because we were working. I would stay with the little babies (two new brothers born in 1956 and 1957) and take care of them . . . Susie, of course, was the older one, so she was always going to work with Dad. Susie was the only one out of us three girls that worked in the hops,” Manuela said.

The fall of 1957 found the Nuñez family at the labor camp in Culver, harvesting potatoes. After the harvest, the family made the momentous decision to stay in Culver instead of migrating to the next crop. Manuela in particular was very happy because this was the first time she could spend a whole school year in one place. After about a year or two—Manuela is not sure, exactly—of working seasonal jobs around the Culver area, a friend of Juan’s from church, Juan Romero, helped him get a job with the railroad. “Papa was at last comfortable with his work, his job was steady, he even had railroad insurance for the first time in his life. He was making a good wage,” Manuela wrote.”

The railroad job took the Nuñez family to Gateway for a few years and then to Bend for a few years before Juan was transferred to Madras. They were assigned to the old depot agent’s house as their living quarters and it was far superior to the housing at the labor camps or the tiny rentals they had lived in when they were migrant workers.

Manuela has fond memories of living there. She writes: “The house was big, plenty of room for us all; a porch surrounded the entire house. My younger brothers were able to run and run around the house. The windows were tall and long and great for sneaking in from the outside and great for jumping out on to the porch. On many Saturday mornings the thundering of feet could be heard as John and George and little Joe David and little Carol chased each other all around the porch.”

Juan Nuñez beautified the house with his green thumb: “Nuestra casa was like an oasis with tall, shady trees that covered the porch area so during hot summer days my brothers could play all they wanted . . . There were a lot nice changes that our dad did to this railroad property. This lot was dry, no grass, no flowers only trees for shade. Dad loved to plant flowers, especially roses. He began watering the dry grass and eventually it began to change into a beautiful lawn. The lawn now surrounded the entire lot. The front of the house that faced the main traffic was where rose bushes were planted and the lawn very nice and inviting,” Manuela wrote.

Manuela continues, “This house is critical in order to understand the whole story. This house, esta casa, is the last place that our parents, nuestros papases, were alive. Their dream of working, educating, and making a home for us, the De La Rosa- Nuñez children, was coming to full circle. This was the first time in their lives that they were making decent money to pay bills, send money to our relatives.” The Nuñez family’s joy in finally being all together in a roomy, attractive home with a comfortable income only compounds the tragedy of what was to occur.

In the early hours of Dec. 22, 1966, Juan Nuñez got up to stoke the coal heater that warmed the old depot house. He mistakenly thought the coals had gone out, so he put some gasoline on the fire, causing an explosion. The house was quickly engulfed in flames. Ultimately, the only survivors were Manuela, her older sister Teresa, and their younger siblings, Carol and Ruben. The oldest sister, Susie, was

married and living with her husband at the time, so she was not injured.

Juanito held on for a week or so as he was treated at OHSU in Portland but could not recover. Manuela was badly burned and was also treated at OHSU. The community in Madras embraced the remaining members of the Nuñez family, as detailed in the accompanying story. Even the local police helped out by looking the other way when Manuela and Teresa out of necessity drove their parents' car without driver's licenses and staff at Madras High School worked with Manuela so she could stay on track to graduate after missing many weeks of school.

But without their parents to bind them together, the family began to disperse. Soon Teresa got married and took the two younger siblings to live with her in Portland. Manuela graduated from high school and took advantage of the Upward Bound program that helped her get into the University of Oregon. There, she met her husband, David Wickham. Eventually, the Wickhams returned to Jefferson County and raised a family. Now retired, the Wickhams live in Eugene to be near their children and grandchildren, but they look back on their life in Jefferson County with fondness.

Before moving away, Manuela served on the board of the JCHS and it was always her goal to help preserve the history of Latinos in Jefferson County and that of her beloved parents in particular. She shared her family's story with readers of THE AGATE as a way of honoring their memory.



Left to right: Richard Peña, Porfirio Peña, Jr. and Antonio Peña. Taken Aug. 2016.

Porfirio Peña, Jr.

Some questions still waiting for answers: What effect, if any, did the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986—often referred to as “amnesty”—have on our local population? At what point and why did we start to see immigrants from countries of Central America? Surely by now we have developed a second or even third-generation Latino community, so how has that affected the larger community?

A good starting place for those who can speak Spanish is a series of interviews conducted by staff from two different Oregon State University programs, Juntos and Oregon Multicultural Archives. They interviewed local families involved in the Juntos college preparation program at Madras High School about their lives before coming to the United States, how they got here, and their experiences in the United States. Some of the questions concern the Latino community and the broader community in Jefferson County and the answers are illuminating. The interviews can be accessed at <http://scarce.library.oregonstate.edu/oma/latinos.html>. Unfortunately, they are only available in Spanish.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Being an Anglo myself, I have felt a little sheepish about taking on the task of documenting the Latino Community in Jefferson County. However, the simple fact is that so far nobody else has published much on the subject. I hope that this first attempt will spur others to augment and improve on my efforts. If you have something to add, please contact me at janeahern@rocketmail.com.

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INTERVIEWS

Peña, Richard, Porfirio Peña, Jr. and Antonio Peña. Personal interview. Aug. 13, 2016.

Wickham, Manuela Nuñez and Jesse David Wickham. Personal interview. Aug. 12, 2016.

“Remembering Trail Crossing”

By Jerry Ramsey

Between the early settlement of north Central Oregon in the 1870s and '80s, and the opening of the “Dalles-California Highway” bridge over Crooked River Gorge in 1927, the main route northbound and southbound across the gorge went through “Trail Crossing.”

Located about a mile upstream (east) from the modern bridge complex, and originally (as its name implies) a place where horses and cattle could negotiate the canyon and ford the river, a wooden bridge was built at the site about 1890 (apparently by Crook County), with timbers from the Mailing mill at Grizzly.

Around this time, the original rough trail straight north out of the canyon (still visible today) was replaced by the building of a steep narrow roadway that angled up on the cliffs north and west of the bridge. Much of the route was “rip-rapped” by hand by piling rocks up against the steep angle of the slope.

With the advent of homesteading on

both sides of Crooked River in the early 1900s, and especially with the construction of the Oregon Trunk and DesChutes railroad lines in 1910-11, vehicular traf-

wagons and even autos to stop at the tops of the north and south grades and send someone down at least part way to see if anyone was crossing the bridge

in the opposite direction or to try to stop them if they were about to come up. The Trail Crossing route was busy enough in the teens and twenties of the last century that a Redmond store, “Lynch and Roberts,” painted a billboard to advertise itself on a prominent rim-rock just north of the bridge (heading for Redmond).

Sometime after the creation of Jefferson County in 1914, the new county moved to replace the old wooden bridge, by now becoming very rickety, with a modern

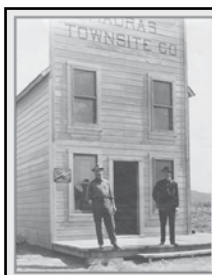
steel structure, mounting it on tall concrete pillars well above the river, so as to avoid high water in run-offs. It was a timely and probably expensive move; but in the often wasteful way of progress, the opening of the Dalles-California bridge in 1927 abruptly terminated the importance of Trail Crossing as a crucial if scary component of early transporta-



Trail Crossing, 1910

fic—farm wagons, stage coaches, heavy freight wagons—increased drastically, and the crooked, steep, and narrow grades out of the canyon on both sides caused frequent right-of-way arguments and accidents—some of them fatal.

In 1910, Crook County undertook improvements on the grades, but still, it continued to be common practice for



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tion through Central Oregon. But for a few years after the opening of the expansive new highway, drivers found themselves traversing Crooked River Gorge by dropping into it and crossing at Trail Crossing! Eventually, Jefferson County sold the steel bridge (to whom, and for what, is unknown), and it was removed, along with a short metal bridge over a deep ravine across the north grade, ending all travel on the old route.

But in Trail Crossing's hey-day, making the trip into and out of the canyon by wagon, buggy, or Model T left an indelible impression on many people. In his unpublished memoir, the late Sid Elliott (who farmed just north of the site) recalled his Elliott grandparents coming from The Dalles in 1909 to take up a homestead near Terrebonne via Trail Crossing. His grandmother had been asleep in the wagon but awoke as they approached the bridge. "She looked around and said, 'George, is this the only way out of this country?' He said 'Yes!,' and she said 'I'm staying!'"

With the opening of the highway bridge, the half-century of Trail Crossing's regional importance ended, and memories of its use, like this one, quickly faded. You won't find it marked on modern maps, and it's not even in McArthur's *Oregon Geographic Names*. A few oldtimers will remember that a small farming community just north of the site (roughly around where

McPheeter's Turf is now) was called "Trail Crossing." It had a school, and its own "Neighborhood News" column in the *Madras Pioneer*, and also a derisive nickname, "Heelstring Nation," meaning that its residents were supposed to

from the bridge, where the currents run slowly. According to Mrs. Anna Martin Merchant's fond recollection in *Jefferson County Reminiscences*, the worshippers would then enjoy an old-fashioned country potluck picnic, before heading back up the grade.

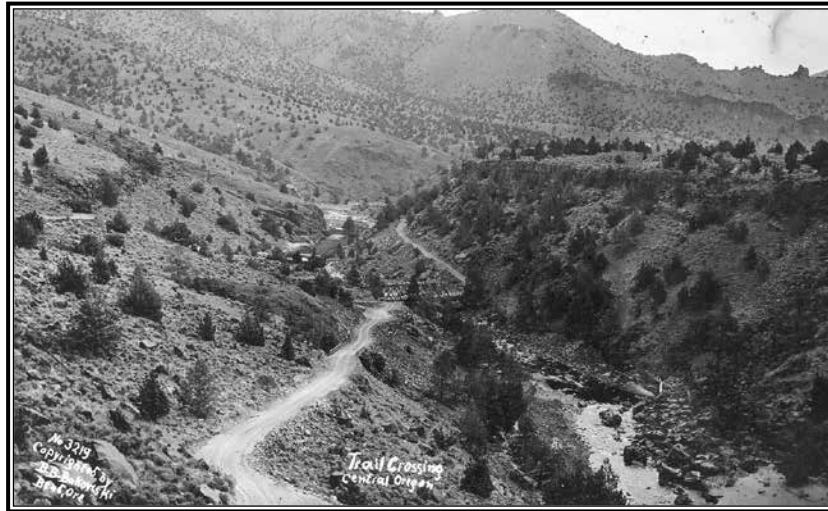
Today, although its nervous early traffic of wagons, buggies, and "motor-cars" is long gone, the site of Trail Crossing is still spectacular, with Crooked River rushing darkly over its rocks, and the pinnacles of Squaw Rock and Mendenhall Ridge looming over the near eastern horizon. But approaches from both the north and the south are privately owned, and posted; and would-be visitors also need to consider that the cliffs on both sides are active eagle and hawk nesting sites, and should be strictly left alone between from February to June.

SUGGESTED READING:

Sid Elliott, "Juniper Trees, Sagebrush, and Rock—then WATER", ms in JCHS Archives

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Anna Martin Merchant, "Trail Crossing," in *Jefferson County Reminiscences*. Portland: Binford and Mort, 1956, 1999, pp. 70-80.



Northside grade to the bridge.



Trail Crossing today.

be barely holding on by their heelstrings.

Maybe so, but the old-time residents of Trail Crossing community kept their earthly spirits up and their eternal prospects bright by holding religious services and mass river baptisms just upstream

Local History Comes to the Third Grade

When JCHS Directors Margee O'Brien and Jerry Ramsey volunteered to talk about local history to the four third-grade classes at Buff Elementary in Madras last spring, they knew they had their work cut out for them. After all, in an age of smart phones for kids, tweeting, texting, and primary-level Internet fluency, what interest could they spark in eight-year-olds with stories and artifacts from the undigitalized Olden Days?

On the other hand, our fearless historians—both retired teachers—knew they had two huge assets to play with: the insatiable, unself-conscious curiosity of third-graders, and their boundless enthusiasms. They also knew that their visits would be carefully prepared for by the Buff teachers: Emily Crowley, Davinie Fiero, Cora Flores, and Margie Long. (Margie Long joined in the fun later, herself, by impersonating a 1916 school teacher, with authentic classroom props from her personal collection.)

So O'Brien and Ramsey decided to go in as "historical personages," somehow transported to Buff Elementary in 2016 from Madras in 1916. O'Brien dressed up as a homemaker just coming home from the week's household shopping, and she brought along a trunk full of irresistible artifacts, including a 1912 Sears Roebuck catalog, kitchen appliances, and a vintage toy washing machine for doll clothes, borrowed from JCHS Treasurer Elaine Henderson.

Ramsey came as "the Oldtimer," wearing cowboy boots and hat, and carrying a gunny sack ("What's a gunny sack, Oldtimer?") full of items that allowed him to hold forth on life in these parts before 1916—Indian customs, early sheep and cattle

ranching, freighting, the coming of homesteaders and railroads. Among other treasures, he showed his young listeners a branding iron, a huge horseshoe, a fleece and sheep-shears.

The two followed each other through all four third-grade classes over two days, and encountered eager attention and bright-eyed interest in the Olden Days, with questions boiling over about how it was around here, way back then. After the visits were over, the kids wrote letters to O'Brien and Ramsey, reporting on what they enjoyed about the visits, and what they were still curious about.

Perhaps predictably, a number of them were provoked by O'Brien's mention that there was no toilet paper in 1916 Madras households, and that out-of-date Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogues provided acceptable substitutes. Ramsey's showing the branding iron was another provocation, some ex-

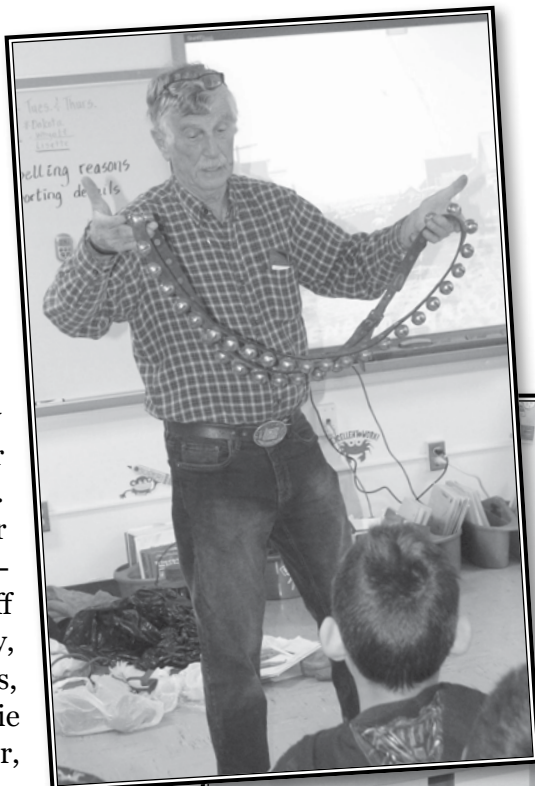
pressing indignation and sympathy on behalf of the calves. One thoughtful boy, however, reasoned that "they burnt the cows so that they would know whose they were."

All in all, the visits seemed to prove that, approached imaginatively and "hands-on," today's kids are open to learning about local history—life as it was here a century ago. And O'Brien and Ramsey agree that they were privileged to catch glimpses of what third-graders in 2016 think

about their own time, historically, in relation to the past. Consider, for example, "Felicia's" comment:

"In my opinion the best part of 100 years ago was that there was no electricity. Because every time the lights go off, I get to stay up late, and staying up late is fun. When the lights go off, we spend more time together, and I like it. We play board games. And read with a flashlight!"

Next year, the teachers and the JCHS hope for more classroom visits, and a "field day" visit for third-graders to the pioneer homestead house and country school at the Fairgrounds.



Thyreicia Simtustus participates in National History Day 2016



Madras High senior Thyreicia Simtustus was a participant for the second time in the National History Day competition held in Maryland last June. A two-time Oregon History Day winner, “Reicie” began her remarkable career in historical research and exhibit design at Madras Middle School, under the tutelage of Courtney Lupton (JCHS Beth Crow Award winner, and recently retired from teaching).

In Lupton’s words, “Thyreicia was amazing in her event. For the second time, her exhibit was selected to represent Oregon at the Kenneth E. Behring National Museum of American History, and this year she had the unique opportunity to discuss her topic and research with Mr. Behring one-on-one as he toured the Museum during this day-long event. Although Reicie didn’t ‘win’—there were thousands of kids there—she had a wonderful experience doing the project (Jan.-June), and representing MHS at the state contest, and Oregon at the national contest.”

Lupton went on to say, “For me, the best part of National History Day is always the growth that happens to each student who commits to the NHD process. Starting with the 2016 theme—Exploration, Encounters, Exchange—Reicie worked toward her topic selection: ‘Celilo Falls/Mid-Columbia Indian Trade Network.’ Along the way she connected her topic to her own family and tribal history, and worked on the project after school, weekends, and spring break. I love the NHD process where students commit to their projects and take charge of their learning, and it was great to be a part of the experience as ‘Guide on the Side.’”

The JCHS is proud to have supported Thyreicia’s successful trip to National History Day, and we wish her continued success in her senior year at MHS and beyond! And we hope that, with Courtney Lupton’s retirement, a way will be found to continue her splendid long-time work with students on History Day projects.

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Human and Natural History at ‘Five Craters’

By Jerry Ramsey

It's convenient to talk about “human history” and “natural history” as separate things—the first concerned with human affairs and what people do with their earthly chances, the second dealing scientifically with the forces and conditions of the earth, the atmosphere, plant and animal life, and so on.

But in truth, it's an artificial distinction, a necessary but sometimes misleading way of thinking. In a region like Central Oregon, “natural history” and “human history” are so closely connected, so interpenetrating that studying the general history of our neck of the woods requires careful attention to both. The story of local exploration, settlement, and development is profoundly conditioned by natural forces at work here over eons—unavoidable premises of our human history from the beginning.

A neat example of this inter-connection came to light a few years ago, when the late Madras historian and educator Beth Crow was delving into the origins of the name of “Smith Rock,” now a popular state park just over the Deschutes County line. In a microfilm of the August 10, 1867 issue of the Albany, Oregon *State Rights Democrat*, Beth found a historically-rich letter to the editor by someone calling himself “Ottoco” (possibly a misprint for “Ochoco”), narrating a recent journey he and four companions had made over the just-opened Santiam Wagon Road, into Central Oregon. One of his fellow travelers was Capt. J.A. White, who was in charge of work on the road; another was “Jackie” Settle, for whom (through mispronunciation) Suttle Lake was named.

“Ottoco” mentions that his party first reached the Crooked River “at Smith's Rock, a high promontory of marl and sandstone

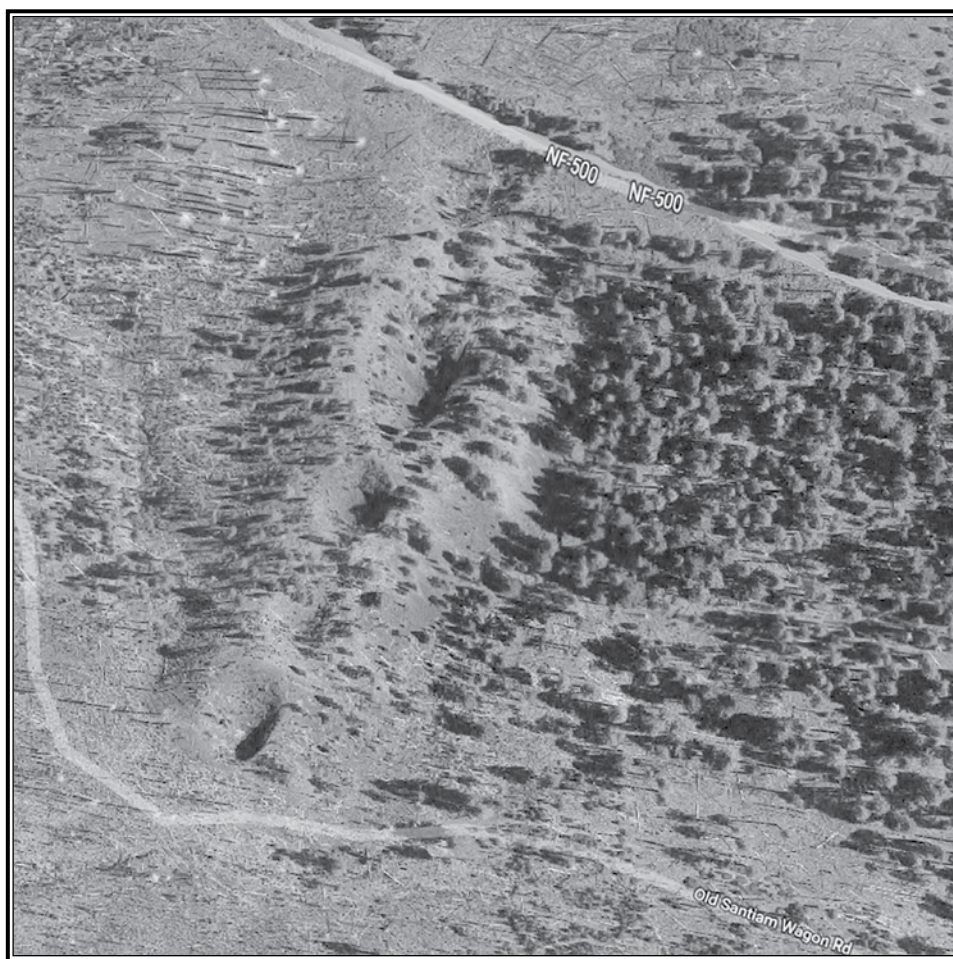
being washed by the waters of Crooked River. This rock is named for the Sheriff of Linn County [John Smith, later a long-time superintendent of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation].” The reference almost certainly refutes a local oral tradition, that the landmark was named for a soldier named Smith who was killed by Indians nearby, or jumped to his death from a pinnacle rather than be captured by them—versions of a tale for which no solid evidence has been found.

But another episode earlier in “Ottoco's” narrative illustrates the interplay of human and natural history vividly. Following the Santiam Wagon Road east past its summit and down past Big Lake and Hayrick Butte to Cache Creek and the Cache Creek Toll Station, the Linn County travelers inspected “three old dry craters, which apparently have blown out their lives centuries ago One of them contains at its bottom a cold spring of ice. These craters average about 60 feet in diameter and 60 feet deep. They stand in a row about ten yards apart.”

Now here is a puzzle—in a long-forgotten 1867 newspaper article, mention of an unusual and intriguing geological feature, apparently unknown today? Three small craters in a row, near the well-documented Cache Creek Toll Station, but not to be found on the U.S. Forest Service “Deschutes Na-

tional Forest Map,” or on the more detailed USFS “quad” maps of the area? Nobody seems to have heard of the place—not at USFS Headquarters in Sisters, not in the hiking and climbing community.

So, an informal search was mounted a couple of years ago—beginning with an online MapQuest search, which promptly turned up clear images of not three but five small craters running down equidistantly from USFS Road 500 to the Old Santiam Wagon



“Five Craters” from the air.

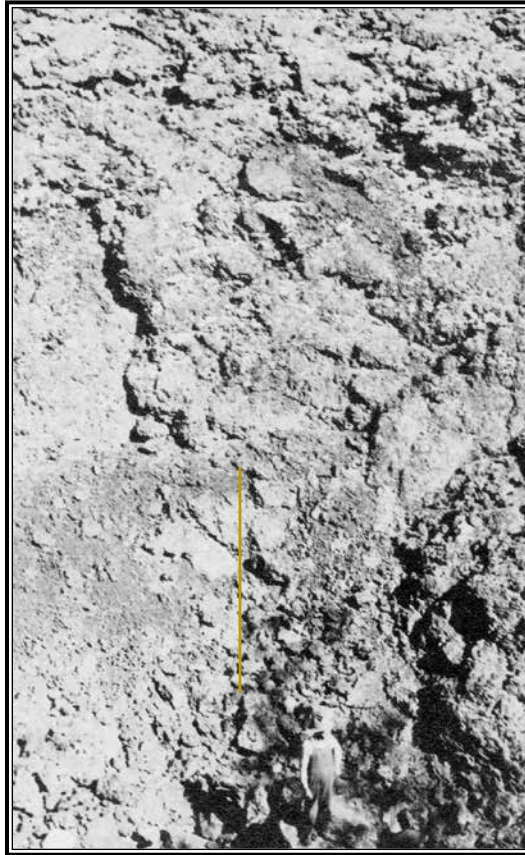
Road. The site is a few miles south of the Jefferson County line. Road 500 is most easily accessed from FS 1028 off the McKenzie Highway about seven miles west of Sisters. 1028 meets 500, in fact, near the location of the Cache Creek Toll Station, where there are historical interpretive signs of interest.

Maybe a mile up 500 (westbound), the highest of the craters will be obvious on your left, with Mt. Washington looming in the south-west as you start down the ridge. A fairly steep but easy scramble down the ridge will show you each of the five craters in turn. They are larger, and deeper, and quite a bit more impressive than “Octtoco” suggests . . . probably 200 feet wide, 100 feet deep or more, and maybe a hundred yards apart. The fact that he counted only three suggests that, hiking up the ridge from the Wagon Road, he and his mates simply turned back too soon.

The ridge is only sparsely vegetated with vines and scrub evergreens, and likewise the surface of the craters themselves—as if the site is still recovering from what must have been a spectacular blowout, whether all at once or in sequence. Coarse red cinders are underfoot, and spiral-shaped “lava bombs” and other volcanic detritus are strewn about.

When were they created? With no geological investigation of the site, any answer is guesswork, but the general area is known to have been volcanically active in the “Middle Holocene” era, 3000 to 1500 years ago. This is the interval when Yapoah Crater, Belknap Crater, Four-in-one Cone, and other volcanic features in the neighborhood were thought to have been busy. Our “Five Craters” are unlike any of them, and they are craters, with no elevated rims or cones—indicating a brief but violent blowout, probably along a fault-line marked by the ridge itself.

One wonders how “Octtoco” and his companions knew to look for the craters as they came down the Santiam Wagon Road. Very likely Capt. White, who was in their party, knew about them from his recent work building the road. As traffic increased along its route—



Middle Crater 1913.

settlers, miners, drovers of livestock, speculators—the little craters may have become a sort of roadside attraction. Apparently they were something of the sort nearly a half-century later, in July 1913, when members of my father’s family, the Ramseys, Wattses, and Wilsons, came by in their wagons on the home stretch of an epic excursion from Agency Plains around Mt. Hood to the ocean at Depoe Bay, and back by way of Sweet Home and the Santiam Road. They duly

climbed up the ridge to see the craters, and took a photo of a member of their party standing on the floor of the biggest one. (See “A Trip to the Ocean by Wagon,” *THE AG-ATE*, NS I, Winter and Spring 2014, p. 13)

How has this local geological feature been so completely forgotten in a little more than a century? Apparently, as traffic over the mountains shifted in the 1920s from wagon road to “motorways,” (the Santiam and the McKenzie Highways), the site was bypassed, and disappeared from travelers’ memories. Why the Forest Service and the US Geodetic Survey have neglected to note it on



Middle Crater 2015.

their maps is harder to figure. But Five Craters are really there—a small-scale and accessible natural wonder, re-discovered by accident in the course of historical research: human and natural history wonderfully intertwined. Go see for yourself!

SUGGESTED READINGS:

“Letter to the Editor by Octtoco,” *Albany State Rights Democrat*, August 10, 1867

Ellen Bishop, *In Search of Ancient Oregon*. Portland: Timber Press, 2003, 2007, pp. 238-242

Lawrence Neilson, Doug Manning, George McCourt, *Pioneer Roads in Central Oregon*. Bend, Maverick Publications, 1985, pp. 74-8.



Two Videos on County Historical Sites

Two video documentaries featuring Jefferson County historical sites have been in the works in 2016 and should be available by early 2017.

One of the documentaries, *Bridging Urban America*, made by Basia and Leonard Myszynski, presents the remarkable life and career of Polish-American bridge engineer Ralph Modjeski. Between the 1890s and the 1930s, Modjeski designed major bridges across America, all of them still in use—for example, the Ben Franklin Bridge in Philadelphia, the Huey P. Long Bridge in New Orleans, the Oakland Bay Bridge, the Broadway Bridge in Portland—and in 1909-10 he designed for James J. Hill and the Oregon Trunk Railroad our iconic “Crooked River Bridge.” In its time, the “High Bridge” was the tallest bridge of its kind in the U.S.

Initially the Myszynskis weren’t sure they would include the structure in their coverage of Modjeski’s work, but a winter 2015 visit to the Crooked River Gorge convinced them to include it, and the footage includes spectacular close-up views of the bridge’s venerable structure taken by a drone-mounted camera.

Startling drone-camera images also figure in a short but impressive video by Donnell Alexander and Sika Stanton on John A. Brown, early African-American homesteader here in the 1880s, and his namesake canyon along Highway 26 northwest of Madras. Working with a grant from Oregon Humanities, Alexander and Stanton, both from Portland, interviewed Dave Campbell and Jerry Ramsey on John Brown and the lore of his canyon, and visited the site of his homestead house and truck garden.

The Historical Society gave support to both projects, and hopes to show the documentaries to the public in 2017. Stay tuned—especially to our website (<http://www.jeffcohistorical.org>).

Donated Organ Joins Museum’s Musical Collection

A recent donation of a Victorian-era parlor organ has enriched the museum’s collection of vintage musical instruments.

The organ, given by Joyce Moore Atchison of Brownsville, was passed on to her as a girl in 1947 by her maternal grandparents, Henry and Lucille Thornton, homesteaders in the Pony Butte area. It came into Central Oregon in the early 1900s with the Musgrave family, who homesteaded near Ashwood. Their daughter, Lucille, married Henry Thornton.

Joyce says she learned to play the organ, but then had to transition to the piano for lessons. Like most foot-pumped home and church organs in this country, it was “modernized” by installation of a vacuum-cleaner motor and pump. . . and it still plays, robustly!

The Musgrave-Thornton organ joins other notable musical instruments in the Museum collection—a pre-1900s upright grand piano, originally owned by Jack Edwards of Hay Creek Ranch, a fiddle owned and played for years by local country fiddler Amos Fine, and a very rare early nineteenth-century concertina, still playable, donated by Howard Turner.

When we re-open the museum at Westside, why not a “musicale” featuring these historic instruments?



Agate VI Birthdays

Two long-time Jefferson County residents, both strong supporters of the Historical Society, celebrated special birthdays this summer, and THE AGATE proposes a toast to Margaret Dement for attaining 105, and Edna Campbell Clark for reaching 100!

Margaret was a champion and mainstay of the museum in its early formative years, and as a local historian and genealogist she has continued to strongly support the cause of local history.

Edna—youngest daughter of pioneer homesteaders Ed and Sarah Rodman Campbell, sister of historian John Campbell, and great-aunt of current JCHS Directors Dave Campbell and Jennie Smith—was instrumental in furnishing the Farrel Homestead house at the Fairgrounds and single-handedly wallpapered its kitchen with old issues of the *Madras Pioneer*, exactly as it was done in the homestead era.

We gratefully salute Margaret and Edna—indispensable long-term players in the Society's mission to preserve and celebrate Jefferson County history!

Welcome to New Members of the Historical Society!

FRED MONROE

KARLEEN SYKES

PHYLLIS KOLLEN

NANCY MOORE

FRANK HOFFMAN

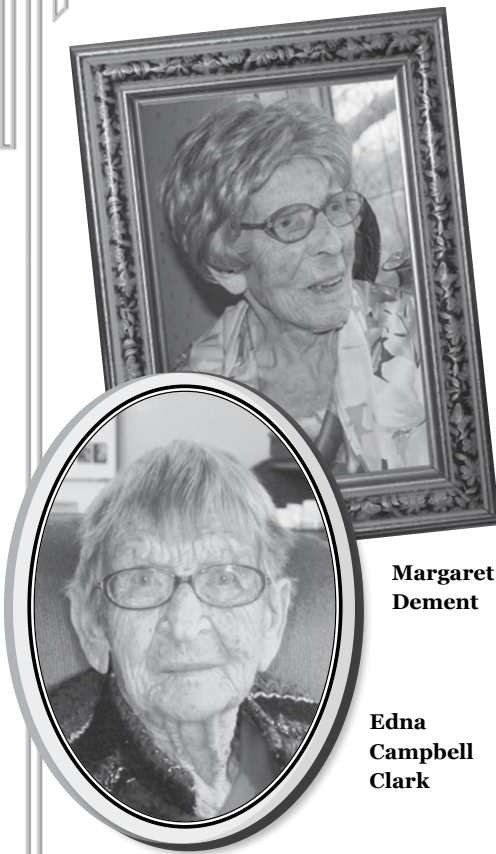
& JOY HARVEY

FLOYD BAUER

GUY SWANSON

VAL JOHNSON

& PAT DINSMOOR



Margaret
Dement

Edna
Campbell
Clark

History Pub Features Don Ratliff

On Thursday, Oct. 27, starting at 5:30, at Great Earth Deli in downtown Madras, the Historical Society will hold another of its popular "History Pubs"—this time featuring Don Ratliff, long-time PGE fish biologist at Round Butte, talking about the natural and human history of trout and salmon in the Middle Deschutes River. Because of limited space, reservations are suggested, at Great Earth or by calling 541-475-1500.



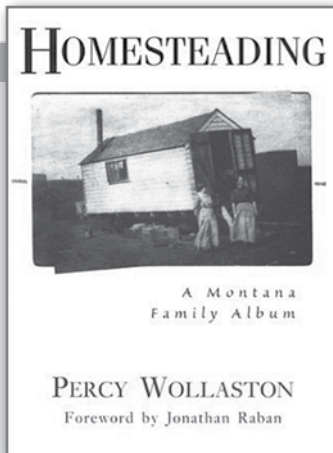
The new (fourth) Jefferson County Courthouse!



Chronicling Jefferson County
History since 1904

Two New Book Reviews

By Jerry Ramsey



Percy Wollaston,
HOMESTEADING:
A Montana Family Album -
Forward by Jonathon Raban.
New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

This little book will be of interest to Central Oregon readers with affinities to the subject of homesteading, reminding them that our region was not the only late (1900-1920) homesteading boom-territory in the West. Percy Wollaston's memoir vividly recounts what it was like for his family and neighbors to try to "prove up" their claims and succeed at dry-farming around 1910 on the steppes of eastern Montana (near the town of Mildred)—in exactly the same time-frame as their counterparts out here.

The similarities and differences between the two farming episodes are equally illuminating. In eastern Montana as in Central Oregon, dry-farming

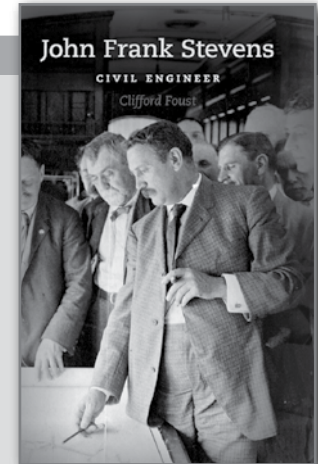
proved to be difficult and chancy, if not downright impossible—this despite the cheerful assurances and promotions of agricultural "experts" like Hardy Webster Campbell, whose dry-farming gospel was widely accepted. Water—for crops, for domestic use—proved to be, in both regions, in chronically short supply; extremes of weather (especially in Montana) and short growing seasons turned out to be heavy burdens. Both regions "boomed" when they did in part because of sometimes-extravagant promotions by the railroads.

In Montana as in Oregon, the homesteading-boom population was diverse—including savvy Midwestern farmers seeking a new start, educated urbanites wanting to "get back to the land," European immigrants, and hopelessly naïve and agriculturally clueless would-be homesteaders. Out of this diversity, Wollaston (whose parents and grandparents came from England) fondly remembers the emergence of a local culture of "neighborliness," tolerance, and mutual support . . . exactly what came to pass out here in communities like Agency Plains, Culver, and Ashwood.

It's fair to say, in fact, that Wollaston's hard-pressed "entrymen" and those in what became Jefferson County had more in common than otherwise. To be sure, our forebears didn't have disastrous prairie fires to

contend with, and the scarcity of juniper for firewood and fenceposts that he mentions was not a problem here! The main difference is that whereas our homesteaders here were talking about irrigation as early as 1912, their Montana counterparts had no such prospects; and although the hardiest settlers here held on and at length realized their dream of irrigated farming, the Great Midwestern Drought and the Depression left Wollaston's home country basically desolated by the 1930s. (Wollaston himself left the farm as a young man, and worked for power companies in Western Montana.) And whereas under the New Deal abandoned homesteads in the southern and eastern uplands of Jefferson County were "reclaimed" for grazing and recreation under the National Grasslands program, nothing equivalent seems to have happened in Wollaston's home country, which remains very sparsely populated to this day.

His book thus has a bleak plot-line, in terms of the prospects for homesteaders like his parents and family; but the charm of this book lies in his sharp-edged, loving recollections of eccentric but mostly good-hearted neighbors, and the funny incidents that lightened the daily struggles of homesteading life on the eastern plains.



Clifford Foust,
John Frank Stevens:
CIVIL ENGINEER.
Bloomington and Indianapolis:
Indiana University Press, 2013.

If James J. Hill and his Great Northern empire drove and paid for the extravagant construction of the Oregon Trunk up the Deschutes River to Madras in 1909-11, the chief instigator and pilot of the project was a larger-than-life engineer and railroad-route "locator" named John F. Stevens.

Along with his remarkable skills as a finder of rail routes through difficult country (he single-handedly discovered Marias Pass in the Montana Rockies for the Great Northern in the winter of 1889, and Stevens Pass in Washington State is named for him), Stevens also had corporate cloak-and-dagger skills that a century later would have qualified him for the Secret Ser-

vice and the CIA. With a blank checkbook and *carte blanche* from Jim Hill in 1909 to get the jump on Edward Harriman and the Union Pacific in what became “the Deschutes Railroad War,” he managed to buy up the defunct “Oregon Trunk Railroad Company” and its crucial Central Oregon right-of-way holdings, clinching the secret deal in style in a clandestine meeting with OT stockholders at midnight in a Portland park. And shortly afterward, in June 1909, he personally surveyed the route up the Deschutes in disguise as a wealthy Scottish angler and sportsman, “John F. Sampson” (to keep Harriman’s spies off his trail), cultivating unsuspecting locals like Howard Turner (Mayor of Madras) for what they could show and tell him.

When the Oregon Trunk line arrived in Madras for “Railroad Day” Feb. 15, 1911, Stevens was rightly celebrated as featured speaker and guest of honor—at which time he jovially apologized to Turner and his other local fishing and socializing buddies for deceiving them about his identity and motives. Evidently they forgave him . . .

Clifford Foust’s biography of Stevens tells the full story of his long and far-reaching career, in

which his Central Oregon adventure appears as only one colorful episode (he never returned to Central Oregon after 1911, but in later years cherished his time here). And maybe this suggests one very good reason to read the book: it puts Stevens’ achievements here with the Oregon Trunk in the context of an international professional career that would seem improbable for its range and historical significance if it weren’t so well documented.

From Foust, we learn that in the years just before coming to Oregon for Hill, Stevens served as Chief Engineer (with President Roosevelt’s strong support) of the American Panama Canal Project. Once again his “locating” skills helped him to campaign successfully, against strong opposition, to build the Canal above sea-level, with two locks, rather than at sea-level. An interesting side-note: in this campaign he was allied with another prominent engineer with Central Oregon credentials, Henry Larcom Abbot, who in 1855 had surveyed the Deschutes Basin for possible railroad routes. Abbot concluded then that a railroad would be impossible to build through these parts; Stevens and Hill (and Harriman) would later refute that judgment! (See

“Henry Larcom Abbot in Central Oregon, 1855,” THE AGATE, V, Spring 2016).

Having gotten the Canal properly located, and having created a basis for eradicating yellow fever in the construction zone, Stevens resigned from the project (infuriating Teddy Roosevelt in doing so), and soon signed up again with Hill, this time to make history in Central Oregon. And shortly after the end of WWI, he was chosen to lead an international mission to consolidate and modernize the Russian railroad system! But this grand project was doomed to failure from the start, with the post-Revolution Bolshevik government collapsing under it, and stymieing nearly all of the improvements recommended by Stevens and his commission. Finally, after nearly six years, headquartered in what was then Russian Manchuria, he resigned and came home to America, and a retirement full of honors and awards. He died at 90 in 1943.

Reading Foust’s account of the astonishing scope and magnitude of John Stevens’ career reinforces and sharpens one’s appreciation of what he accomplished mid-career in Central Oregon. What would our railroad history here look like, now,

without him? And Foust is very astute in offering revealing personal details about his impatient, tenacious, supremely resourceful protagonist. It turns out that during his “fishing trip” along the Deschutes in 1909 he took along his thirteen-year-old son, Eugene. And earlier, in St. Paul in 1903, he got into an epic fist-fight with Jim Hill’s son and chief assistant, Louis Hill. Apparently the younger Hill resented Stevens’ special rapport with his father: reportedly Stevens came out on top, as he usually did in his engineering skirmishes. The altercation illustrates not just Stevens’ formidable temper, but also Jim Hill’s unshakeable allegiance to him—with consequences soon to come out here in Oregon.






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(Make check out to JCHS; mail to address at left)

☐ Yes, I'm interested in becoming a History Volunteer

☐ Yes, I would like to make a donation to the JCHS (the Society is a registered non-profit organization; donations and gifts to it are tax-deductible)

☐ I have artifacts, photos, written material I would like to donate to the JCHS Museum