

— SPRING 2018 —

THE AGATE

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Dear Agate Readers,

Here's Issue IX of THE AGATE. It comes with our best wishes for a healthy and enjoyable 2018—and as always with an invitation to join us (and the Jefferson County Historical Society) in our excursions into county and regional history! In particular, we look forward to greeting you at the annual JCHS Dinner, Saturday, April 7.

This issue focuses on “The Thirties”—in many ways a dark and distressed time here, with a prolonged drought, range fires, wind-and-dust storms, crop-failures, and the national Depression, forcing many residents, especially farmers, to move away. And yet mid-way in that decade signs of recovery, renewal, and growth were appearing—notably, official confirmation that the long-awaited “North Unit” irrigation project would soon be under construction.

Jane Ahern's well-researched essay on the federal “Resettlement” program here in the Thirties and its controversies and legacies truly breaks new historical ground; the important story she tells has never been fully told before. Likewise, most of the 1936 photos illustrating her essay and the following piece on the photographer Arthur Rothstein are appearing here in print for the first time, courtesy of the Division of Prints and Photographs of the Library of Congress, where they are archived. And the vivid impression of the town of Madras as it was in 1934 by the celebrated Southern novelist Erskine Caldwell has not been re-published until this issue.

We hope you enjoy the whole issue; and please let us know what you think of it, by phone, email, or mail, or by posting on our website (<http://www.jeffcohistorical.com>) or on our Facebook page.

“Museum at Warm Springs Celebrates Its 25th Year”

In March 1993, the Museum at Warm Springs first opened its doors to the public, and now what has become one of Central Oregon's most respected and popular cultural institutions has launched a season of twenty-fifth birthday celebrations, beginning with a Warm Springs Community reception earlier in March.

The celebration schedule, as outlined by Museum Director Carol Leone, features the following:

March 17-May 26: Museum Exhibit “TWANAT—Celebrate Our Legacy”

June 7-September 29: “Patriot Nations”—A Banner Exhibit from the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C.

June 21-November 3: Special Exhibit, “Memory of the Land : the Treaty of the Middle River Tribes and Bands”—with original texts and signatures, on loan from the National Archives

October 25, 26, 27: Treaty Symposium at Kah-Nee-Tah Resort

For additional information, call the Museum, at 541-553-3331.

The Museum at Warm Springs has served the Indian community and the public at large generously and well over its quarter-century of life. Its programs have widened and enhanced our understanding of local history from a Native American perspective, and we are very fortunate to have it in our midst. We urge all readers of THE AGATE to join in the Museum's celebrations in coming months.

“AGATE WINS 2018 OHC Award for Excellence”

We're proud to announce that the Oregon Heritage Commission has given THE AGATE a 2018 “Heritage Excellence Award.” The awards honor people and organizations that have made the most of available resources. According to OHC Coordinator Beth Dehn, “THE AGATE has been selected for documenting diverse community history, being a high-quality publication, and serving as an innovative example of how to partner with the local paper to reach the greater public while your museum is closed.” On behalf of the Jefferson County Historical Society, our readers, and our partners with the Madras Pioneer, we gratefully accept this award.



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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.

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Editor: Jane Ahern

Graphic Designer: Jamie Wood

Publisher: Jerry Ramsey

The Marginal Lands Program in Jefferson County, 1934-38

By Jane Ahern

In the two decades between 1900 and 1920, the place that is now Jefferson County underwent a rapid transformation from sparsely-populated reservoir of bunch grass and sagebrush in the northwest corner of Crook County to brand-new county with several small towns, two railroads, and numerous country schools. The total number of homestead claims filed rose to about 700, comprising almost every parcel of tillable land in the county.

Homesteaders flocked to Central Oregon because it had some of the last available land. They were alerted to the opportunity by hyperbolic advertising seen in eastern and mid-western newspapers— often placed by the railroads— that touted good roads, excellent soils, and plenty of water.

The first farmers arrived to find lush tracts of waist-high grass that, once cleared of sagebrush and rocks, plowed, and sowed with wheat, produced good crops. All that and stunning mountain views to boot.

Other factors favored the homesteaders. World War I disrupted farming in Europe and created a high demand for American agricultural products such as the dryland wheat that predominated Jefferson County farming. The newly built railroads enabled local farmers to get their wheat to market and help fulfill said demand. Jefferson County began to prosper.

Unfortunately, calamity was just around the corner.

Hard Times in Jefferson County

What the homesteaders could not have known is that they had moved into Central Oregon during an uncharacteristically

wet spell. Starting as early as 1917 by some accounts, the climate returned to its usual semi-arid state, punctuated by intermittent years of drought. Stripped of its natural cover of bunch grass and unwatered by rain, the soil turned out to be much less fertile than it had initially appeared.

At the same time that crop yields were declining due to drought and depleted soil, commodity prices also began declining. When World War I ended in 1918, European farms began to produce again, reducing demand for American products. American farmers racked up a surplus of wheat and other staple crops that drove down their prices precipitously. Add one more problem: during the peak years many farmers had taken on debt to buy more land and farm equipment.

With rainfall averaging only 6- 8 inches per year and often coming at the wrong time for the crops, Jefferson County farmers desperately needed irrigation but, despite more than a decade of effort, local leaders had so far been unable to make it happen.

Drought, declining yields, low prices, and high debt combined to create an untenable situation for many homesteaders. Unable to feed their families or pay their taxes, many farmers gave up and moved away, beginning in the early 1920s.

In 1924, Portland journalist Marshall Dana reported as part of a series of stories for the *Oregon Journal* that Jefferson County's farm population had dropped from 600 families to 100. Madras had shrunk from 500 to 200 people, Metolius from 250 to 60 and Culver from 150 to 43. (See Sept. 2014 issue of THE AGATE for full text of Dana's story)



Resettlement Camp in 1937, looking south from Rimrock Springs viewpoint



Camp site in 2017

In her application to the National Park Service to list settlement of the Crooked River National Grassland Area on the National Register of Historic Places, US Forest Service employee Janine R. McFarland states that, "By 1934, fewer than 50 of the nearly 700 original homestead applicants remained in Jefferson County . . ." (McFarland, p. E-25)

As low rainfall continued throughout the 1930s, Jefferson County experienced occasional dust storms similar to those that characterized the Dustbowl of the Great Plains, though much less frequent. As in the Great Plains, the removal of the natural grasses and shrubs and the regular plowing by farmers had broken down the light, sandy topsoil and left it vulnerable. With no moisture to hold it down, it was easily blown away.

The most notable dust storm occurred in April of 1931, when powerful winds blew for more than 24 hours. Millions of board feet of timber were blown over in the Camp Sherman area and around Madras some buildings were blown off their foundations or lost roofs.

Crop damage around the county was uneven; areas with sandy topsoil were the worst hit. The Grandview area, which didn't have an abundance of topsoil to begin with, was decimated (see Guy Swanson's "A History of Grandview, Oregon" in the Sept. 2017 issue of THE AGATE).

Another significant dust storm struck on March 28, 1935, damaging telephone lines, blowing over chicken coops and forcing cars to stop on the highway. The *Madras Pioneer* reported that 15 cars were so clogged with dust that they had to be towed to the Main Street Garage.

In 1934, the drought caused a near total crop failure and as a result, many landowners were unable to keep up with county or state taxes. The situation became so dire that in 1935 Jefferson County asked the state government to write off county residents' unpaid taxes for 1934 and 1935. Governor Charles H. Martin was quoted in the *Madras Pioneer* as saying, "I am

not unmindful of the distress in your county and shall certainly make every effort to afford relief to your people." However, Martin ultimately denied the county's plea, saying the state attorney general had deemed it unconstitutional.

Also in 1934, local ranchers were forced by circumstances to sell off their cattle to the federal government. The drought had destroyed any chance of growing adequate feed for livestock. The grasslands were already overgrazed, so there was little for cattle to eat out on the range. With a choice between selling them or having them starve to death, most farmers sold. (see "Controversial Novelist Visits Madras in 1934" in this issue)

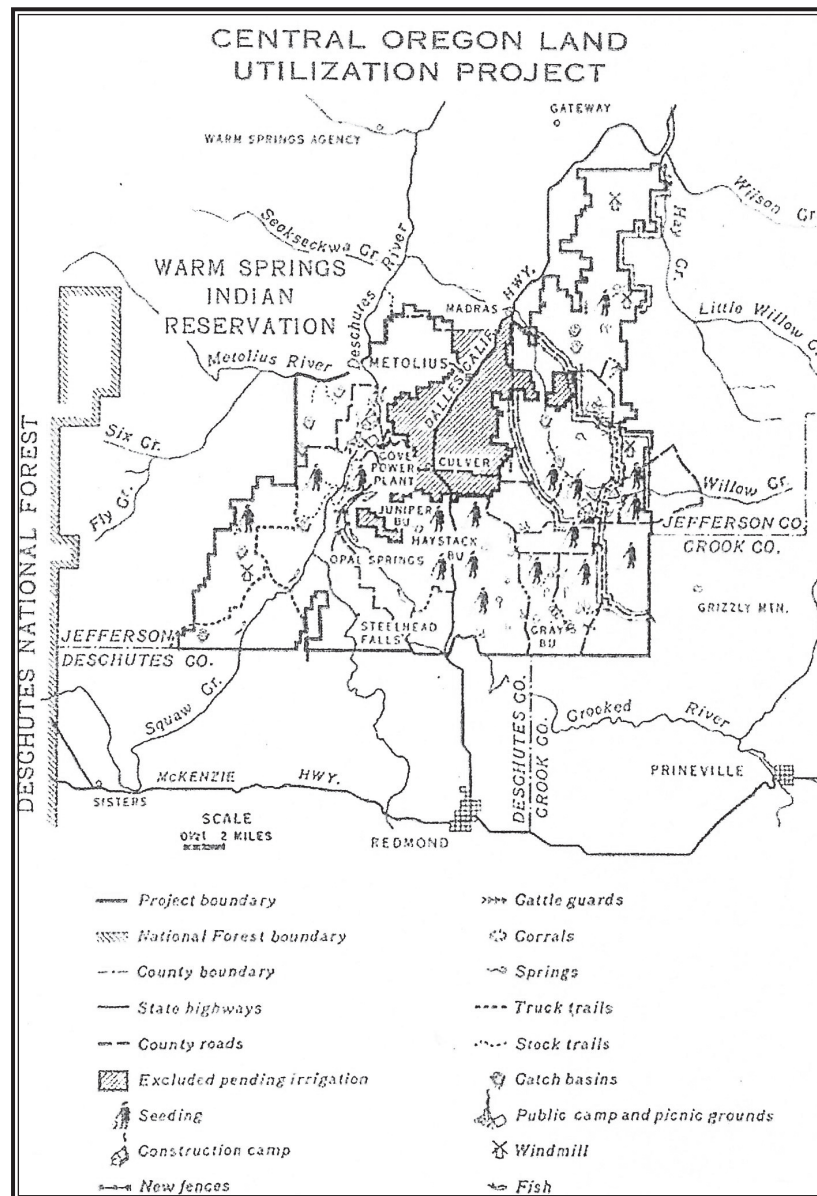
In the early '30s, the state provided some support to Jefferson County through its State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA), which provided funding for local government to hire men for work such as repairing roads and public buildings. The state funding was to pay for labor but not materials and the local entity was responsible for supervising the work. By September 15, 1935, those activities had been

transferred to the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA), one of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal agencies intended to help destitute citizens.

Other New Deal programs were also active in Jefferson County. One of the most significant, with the greatest long-term consequences to the county, was the Land Utilization Program (LUP), also known as the "submarginal lands program" or the "marginal land program" as it was more commonly called locally.

The New Deal for agriculture

Starting in the 1860s, the federal government's homestead policy encouraged people to claim land and set to farming all across the western half of the United States with too little regard to soil quality and climate. After the best land had been claimed, the flow of homesteaders continued, with latecomers



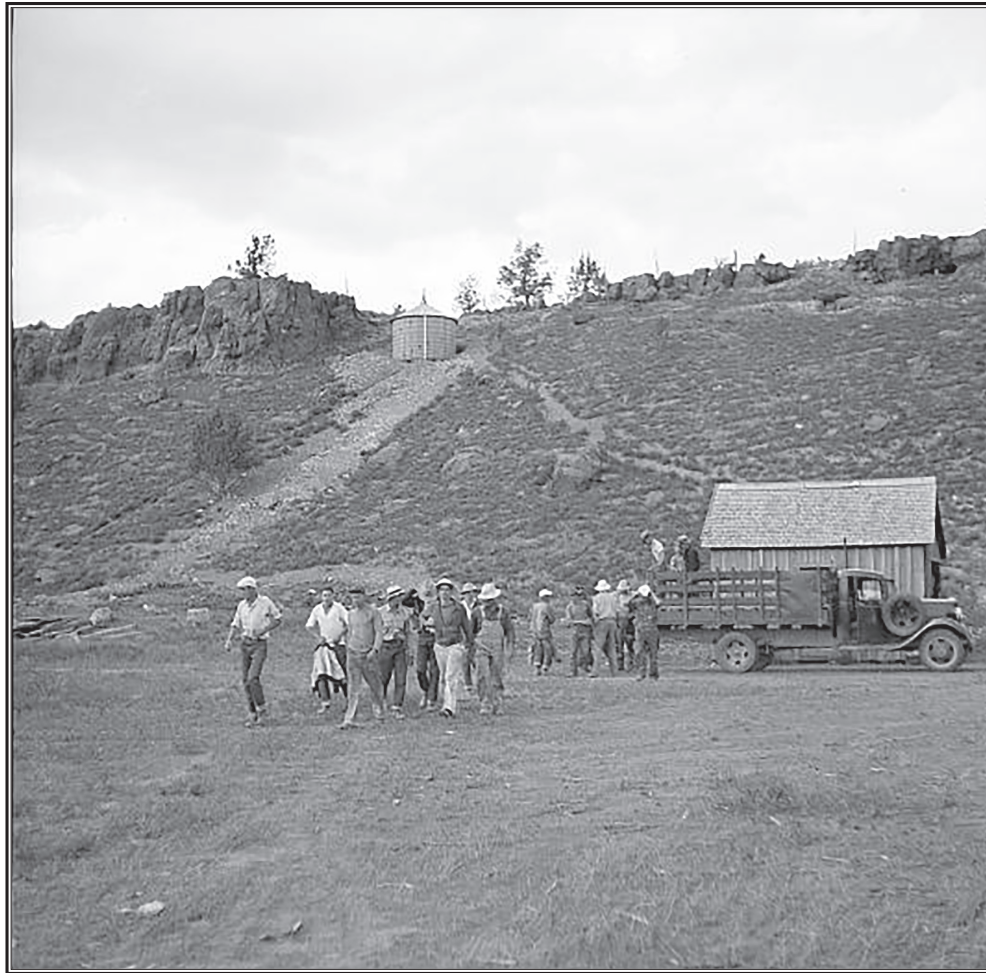
settling in areas that could not sustain crops long-term.

To address the situation, under President Franklin Roosevelt the US government did an about-face in its public lands policy. In February 1934, the president issued an executive order halting settlement of public lands in 12 Great Plains and West Coast states and around the same time established a process for reacquiring land.

The Land Utilization Program (LUP) was a scheme to buy up “submarginal” land that could not support a family and help the sellers move to a more suitable location. Depending on its location and natural state, the submarginal lands would then be redeveloped for use as rangeland, reforested, given to Native American tribes, or restored for wildlife or public recreation.

The LUP was initiated under the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), established by an act of Congress in 1933, which was perhaps better known for its other responsibility—remedying the aforementioned supply-and-demand issues by instituting a voluntary system of production control. It would pay farmers to reduce their output with the goal of restoring prices to their 1909-1914 levels. Jefferson County farmers participated in both the LUP and the production controls, which must have been a lifesaver for many. Between 1933 and 1935, county wheat farmers received an aggregate of \$207,813.36 from the AAA wheat program and \$4,149.07 for the corn-hog program. In January, 1936 the US Supreme Court declared the Agricultural Adjustment Act unconstitutional, prompting consternation among local farmers, but the program was reinstated in 1938 after Congress made changes necessary to render it constitutional.

For the LUP, the AAA was allocated \$25 million funneled through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) to buy about 10 million acres of submarginal land in 45 states.



Workers coming from truck to Resettlement Camp after a day at work (Rothstein photo)

In Oregon, there were LUPs in western Oregon, the Silver Creek area, around Burns, and in Malheur County in addition to the Central Oregon LUP, which ultimately was all within Jefferson County.

Under the AAA, the LUP process required the involvement of many other federal agencies working in conjunction with the AAA. The administration of the program was so cumbersome that it was not functional.

In order to streamline the process, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 7072 establishing the Resettlement Administration (RA). The RA would be a stand-alone agency with four main divisions: the Land Utilization Division; the Resettlement Division,

which was to help families find and purchase good farmland; the Division of Rural Rehabilitation, whose task was to help farmers restore their credit through loans, grants, and debt adjustment; and the Suburban Program, an incredibly ambitious plan to build complete communities from scratch—homes, schools, parks, and businesses included.

The executive order specified that the RA would be helmed by USDA Undersecretary Rexford G. Tugwell. Tugwell had been a Columbia University professor of Economics and a founding member of Roosevelt’s Brain Trust—a small group of academics recruited to help Roosevelt develop policy during his first presidential campaign and term of office.

Tugwell was a believer in government planning and had a special interest in land use. Seeing that the Land Utilization Program under the AAA was hindered by red tape, it was he who urged Roosevelt to create the new agency.

The RA pulled together several divisions that had formerly been housed in other departments. It absorbed the LUP from the AAA, the Division of Subsistence Homesteads from the Interior Department and the Division of Rural Rehabilitation from the Emergency Relief Administration.

The RA was controversial from the start, probably because it went well beyond providing financial aid and skirted rather close to communism. For one thing, aid recipients were required to submit to “supervision.”

In his *First Annual Report*, Tugwell wrote, “By means of supervision, certain socially backward farm families are encouraged to participate in the activities of the community. In addition . . . proper home management is as important as farm management. Through supervision, then, economic and social rehabilitation is accomplished.”

The “supervisor” was an agricultural expert, often employed through a county extension office, who helped farmers plan and manage the farm. The “home management” Tugwell mentions referred to the fact that farm families (read: wives) who received RA assistance were expected to raise enough fruits, vegetables, milk and eggs to supply their own needs and to can foods for the winter. No doubt the supervisor checked up on the aid recipients regularly.

Some of the aid recipients were resettled through “infiltration,” that is, by helping them buy existing farms in established farming communities, but others were placed in brand-new farm communities together with other aid recipients. In the “group resettlement projects,” the farms would be owned by a co-op, though families would eventually have the option to buy their farms. Schools, canneries, and other community necessities would be provided and farmers were encouraged to buy farm machinery cooperatively.

The Suburban Program was, if anything, more paternalistic. “Greenbelt communities will be as safe, healthy, and pleasant as modern science can make them,” wrote Tugwell. (*First Annual Report*, p. 4)

The so-called “greenbelt communities” were built on the



RA workers developing a spring, Lamonta area (Rothstein photo)

outskirts of urban areas so that residents could find work in the cities but live encircled by a belt of farmland and woodlands that would provide a chance for residents to grow produce for personal use or to supplement their income. The communities were designed for at least 750 families and had stores, schools, parks, etc.

Three greenbelt communities were completed, all of which are now on the National Register of Historic Places: Greendale, WI, Greenhills, OH, and Greenbelt, MD. Greenbelt in particular seems to have embraced and maintained the cooperative spirit. The

town’s website describes its founders: “The first families, who arrived on October 1, 1937, found no established patterns or institutions of community life. Almost all were under 30 years of age. All considered themselves pioneers in a new way of life.”

With so much to do, the RA grew to be an enormous agency with many smaller divisions to supplement the four main divisions. Because it was engaged in creating whole communities, the RA needed architects and a construction division. And because it was trying to establish a better standard of living and provide an example of decent living, it needed to furnish the new homes properly. That called for a special skills division that employed designers and woodworkers who would draw up furniture designs, make prototypes in the woodworking shop and then contract with furniture manufacturers to mass produce the pieces. And it wasn’t only furniture. Tugwell wrote in his *Report*, “New designs in textiles, ceramics, and other accessories are being developed where practical or necessary.”

Perhaps in response to the strong opposition to the RA by conservatives in Congress and around the nation, the RA put a lot of effort into producing propaganda. The Special

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Skills Division had an Artist Group that produced paintings, murals, illustrations, etc. to document RA activities. The artists designed 60 posters, helped prepare six exhibitions around the country to showcase the RA's work, and collaborated with the Information Division by producing artwork for RA publications.

The Information Division, in addition to being the RA's liaison with the press, produced two documentary films called "The Plow that Broke the Plains" and "The River." Both are acclaimed for their musical scores by Virgil Thomson.

Perhaps the most celebrated arm of the RA was the Historical Section of the Information Division, which employed photographers to create a historical record of "the American scene" and document RA activities. Roy Stryker, a friend of Tugwell's from Columbia University, was appointed to lead the project. His most famous recruit was probably Dorothea Lange, who took the iconic "Migrant Mother" photo at a labor camp in California. Another of Stryker's photographers, a young man named Arthur Rothstein, photographed RA programs in Oregon, including what he referred to in his captions as the "Rimrock Camp" but which was more often called by the *Pioneer* the "Lamonta" camp. (See accompanying story on Rothstein by Jerry Ramsey)

The LUP in Jefferson County

The AAA began assessing the situation in Jefferson County in 1934, conducting appraisals and collecting offers from farmers to sell their land to the government. They were trying to determine the size and boundaries of the submarginal lands. In 1934, the *Pioneer* reported in its December 6 issue that AAA representatives had held a meeting to float a plan for the government to buy all the privately held land in Jefferson

County and resettle the current occupants elsewhere. They assured landowners that this would not happen unless they wanted it to, but applied a certain amount of pressure by pointing out that production control payments, cattle buying,

and seed loans might not continue indefinitely and by reciting statistics about tax delinquencies, rainfall and crop returns.

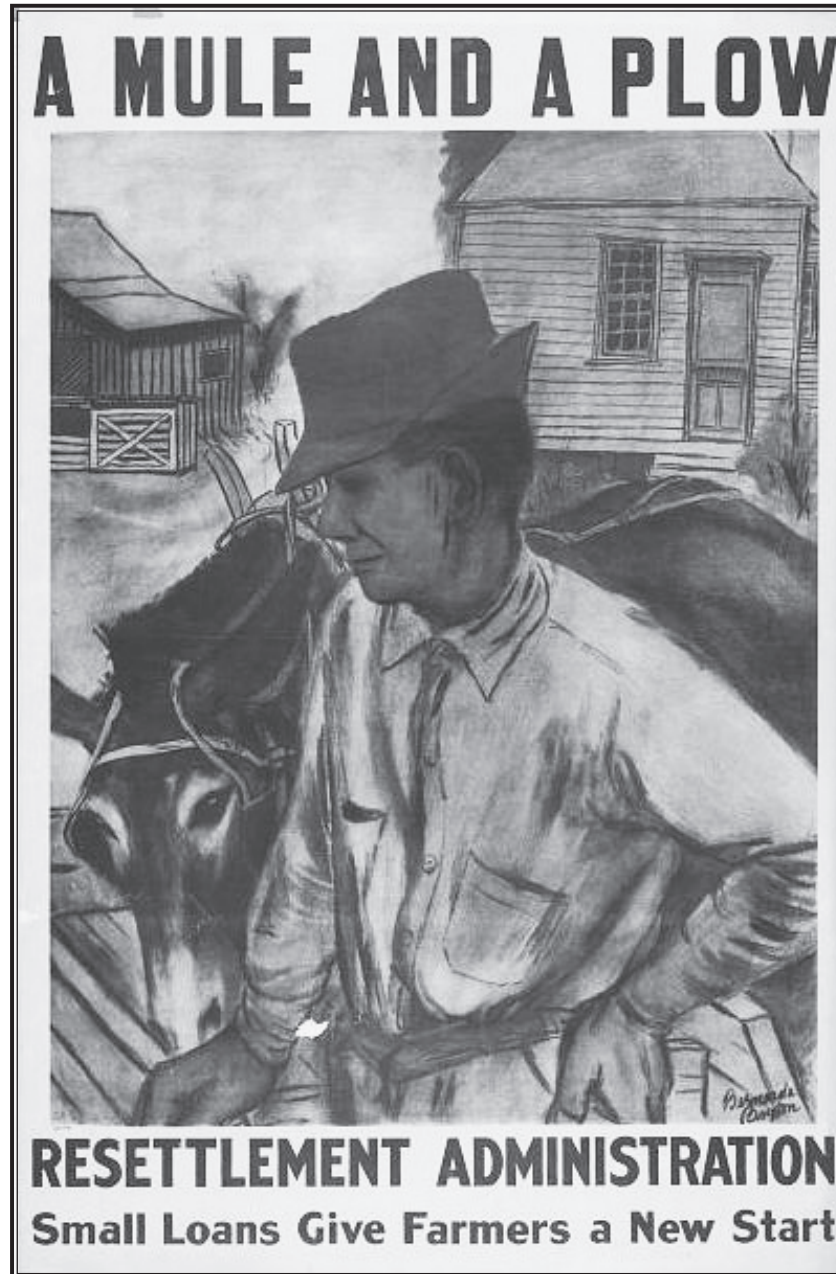
There is no telling what would have happened had the farmers accepted this initial proposal. Jefferson County would have been left with no tax base and no reason to exist. But farmers within the North Unit Irrigation District had not given up their dream of irrigation and they voted to hang onto their property. Farmers outside the irrigation district were more willing to sell.

The AAA backed down and within a few weeks, the *Pioneer* was reporting that the regional office had received approval from their supervisors in Washington, D.C. to buy about 100,000 acres in Jefferson County, none of it within the North Unit. However, the AAA left open the possibility of expanding the submarginal lands if more farmers came forward to sell, and regardless of what they told Jefferson County farmers publicly, there is some evidence that they still thought they would end up buying a lot more than 100,000 acres.

Tugwell's *First Annual Report* says very clearly in a table at the back that as of May 1, 1935 (five

months after they gave the 100,000 acre figure), when the LUP was transferred to the RA, the intent was to purchase 360,000 acres in Central Oregon. And in fact there were reports in the *Pioneer* and the *Bend Bulletin*, in early to mid-1935 that the AAA briefly entertained the idea of extending the submarginal lands east to the Ashwood area and buying about 10,000 acres in Deschutes County and about 20,000 acres in Crook County

In any case, the table shows reduction of the Central Oregon



1936 RA Poster

LUP by about 73 percent, or down to 97,856 acres as of June 30, 1936. In the end, all of the submarginal lands purchased in Central Oregon were in Jefferson County.

By the beginning of 1935, E.M. Peck had been hired as the Central Oregon LUP project manager. Ray Brewster and C.C. Snyder were field men, Mary Ullman was the office clerk, Margaret Luckey was the stenographer, and Kenneth Iverson was the attorney. Two weeks later, the *Pioneer* named six new “field men” who would soon report for duty: E.O. Smith, Willis Boegli, Sherwood Williams, J.M. Freeman, Sam J. Crouch and John Campbell. At that time, they were expecting to hire 16 field men all together.

Throughout 1935, the RA was engaged in hiring staff, appraising and selecting land to purchase, negotiating with landowners and planning its land restoration activities. Very little was reported in the *Pioneer*, but this work must have been going on because in December, 1935 the *Pioneer* wrote that the government had accepted 62 options on 17,000 acres of submarginal land. In the same issue, the *Pioneer* also said that Attorney Bernard Ramsey had been appointed Special Attorney to the Department of Justice for title examination of lands to be acquired by the government. He would be paid \$3,200 per year and keep his place in Lewis H. Irving’s office.

At the beginning of 1936, the RA was ready to begin land restoration work on the submarginal lands. By March, the workers had completed a substantial amount of work on preparing the lands for grazing. Foremen John Campbell and Merritt Freeman were in charge of 40 men, all locals, with hiring preference given to those who had sold their land to the government. They were split between two locations—Grandview and Lamonta.

The men had built three stock trails from rimrock flats to Willow Creek, with a fourth planned. They had also built one mile of road and a half-mile of stock trail from

the base of Round Butte to the Deschutes River and planned to build another trail to Big Eddy, two miles downriver. They had cleaned out the old Ruble spring at the Cyrus place near Gray Butte and built an underground reservoir and cattle trough. They were busy seeding grass and had cut and split 6,000 juniper posts for fencing.

40 workers was a good start, but the LUP kept growing. By May, 1936, the new work camp was almost ready. It was built to house 100 men at a site on the old Jerry Achey homestead about one mile north of Lamonta. There were 17 buildings—mostly bunkhouses—and a water tank on the hill above the camp. The site is now the Crooked River National Grasslands Field Headquarters. The work camp buildings have been replaced and the camp’s water tank removed from the rimrock above.

The camp superintendent was Oscar Prose and the first head cook was Bill Moore. Moore was a local who had homesteaded on the Agency Plains. His granddaughter, Pat Moore Howard says he would have been about 68 years old in 1936. She remembers visiting her grandfather at the RA camp when she was 10:

“We (family) did take a side trip once from Madras on a highway and then cutting off south maybe through a once-plowed field. No sagebrush or stubble. I think it was after noon but don’t remember any other people being there or other big buildings. He was at the kitchen-mess hall. [It was] a long building full of eating tables and long benches to sit on. Every so often [there was] a window with a fairly wide ledge that custard pies were cooling on. The pies impressed me, never heard of custard pie before. We just had custard in a bowl.

We didn’t stay long as he was going to get busy. I didn’t see Grandpa Bill very much. He was always off cooking somewhere while grandma ran [her]



Baseball game at the Work Camp (Rothstein Photo)

boarding house.”

Moore was succeeded as head cook by Elvis King, who shared his recollections with the *Pioneer* in 1999. King said that the camp had no electricity, so they used Coleman lanterns for light, cooked on a woodstove, and heated huge vats of water to wash dishes. King mentions pies too: “Imagine making pies for 125 people with a wood stove!”

In their spare time, some of the workers organized a baseball team and a pretty good one, apparently. “Redmond Defeated by Marginal Lands” read a *Pioneer* headline from July 1936. The story goes on to say, “After coasting along for six innings, the flashy softball team from the marginal land camp at Lamonta finally went into action and scored three runs to defeat an all-star Redmond line-up 3 to 2 in a 7-inning game played at Redmond Tuesday evening.” There was talk of combining the best of both those teams to take on Bend for the right to enter the state tournament at Salem, but there was no follow-up in the newspaper.

Restoration work on the marginal lands was progressing well, but all was not copacetic with the land acquisition aspect of the program. In the spring of 1936, the RA was a factor

because Tugwell addressed it in his *First Annual Report*:

“Unfortunately, a great many such persons [who have given options to sell] have assumed that, shortly after an option has been given, they may expect to receive a check in payment for their land. There are many reasons why such a result cannot be achieved in a short period of time.”

Management of the LUP was more efficient under the RA than under the AAA, but the land acquisition process was still very slow. The hang-up, Tugwell asserted, was due to the need for the Department of Justice and the Comptroller General to sign off on all sales. Both of those agencies were overwhelmed with the unprecedented volume of titles to inspect and sales to approve and furthermore, they were finding that many land titles had “defects” that could be “eliminated only by painstaking collection of necessary curative material.”

Finally, in August, 1936, W.D. Cyrus had the honor of receiving the first payout from the government. He was paid \$4,520 for 500 acres. The check was first sent to attorney Bernard Ramsey, who represented the Department of Justice, and he would settle any liens before paying the net over to Cyrus. A *Pioneer* editorial opined that the payment “does away

.....
“You will want the welfare and prosperity of coming generations to rest on a stabilized agriculture based on fertile fields, lush grazing areas, protective forests and deserts transformed into agricultural oases through irrigation.” Walter A. Duffy, Region XI Director.

in a local effort to recall County Judge W.R. “Riley” Cook. The recall petition alleged that Cook had failed to fulfill his campaign promises and that he was not cooperating with the RA. The *Pioneer* published Cook’s lengthy response in which he defended his interaction with the RA. Cook said he had signed an option to sell 10,555 acres of county land at \$1.60/acre and that the RA had turned it down 5 months later.

The county land in question had mostly been obtained from former occupants in lieu of taxes. There was a lot of concern in the county about land being removed from local tax rolls and what the reduced tax base would mean for the future of the county. Judge Cook would probably have preferred to sell the land to private owners in order to be able to collect taxes on it at some point, hence his alleged resistance to selling it to the federal government.

Cook went on to criticize the RA because “. . . not a single parcel of land has been paid for in Jefferson County after a period of 16 months.” He admitted he had advised people not to give up their deeds until the purchase price had been assured and said that not even US Representative Pierce was sure the RA would ever pay.

Cook prevailed in the recall vote—384 to 334—but the episode highlights a problem that must have plagued LUPs nationally

with all doubt as to the genuineness of this program.”

Jefferson County residents found other reasons to grumble about the LUP. Prior to the 1930s, the federal government had mostly left Jefferson County alone, so residents were unused to—and wary of—government interference in local matters. Some felt that the government was paying too little for the land and others said the government pressured people to sell against their will. Jerry Ramsey’s grandfather was one of the latter.

Ramsey recounts the family story: “My grandfather, Joe Mendenhall, was hanging on near Opal City in the early ’30s, getting by, subsisting, as were his neighbors, like Carl King and Johnny Henderson. But apparently the RA ‘agents’—probably trying to fill in the gaps on their project maps—were very persistent in trying to get ‘Pop’ Mendenhall to give up on his place . . . until reportedly he told the agent not to come back, and if he did, Pop would have his shotgun at the ready! He was a very jovial, affable man, but the RA efforts must have been demoralizing and maybe insulting. He (a widower) was getting by, and was pretty sure that that the long drought would end—and it did, in the late 30s.”

In contrast to land owners disgruntled at being pushed to sell out, there were plenty who were glad to have the opportunity to recoup some cash and start over. O.M. Cyrus, who moved to

Cloverdale after selling his Jefferson County homestead, told the *Pioneer* that even though he might have eventually come out on top, he felt lucky that the government had bought him out.

And while county residents fretted about the federal government swallowing up the local tax base, RA officials were making the case that appropriate use of the land could save local governments money. In a January, 1936 publication, Region XI Director Walter A. Duffy wrote, "The 130 families stranded in the area have had a desperate struggle for existence in recent years, with many on relief, and tax delinquencies make county government a serious problem."

Tugwell opined in his *First Annual Report*, "An indirect value of the land program is that local governments will be saved considerable money in road repair and maintenance, in schools, medical facilities, and other public services. In practically every State there are isolated areas where expenditures for public services far exceed the taxes collected."

The marginal lands program certainly benefited local economies, at least temporarily, by recovering delinquent taxes and helping creditors get paid off. The *Pioneer* published some of Duffy's comments in which he cited statistics. He said

that by the end of 1936, the RA had paid out \$83,824 to 71 land owners. About 10 percent of the total went to pay back taxes and another 13 percent covered outstanding mortgages and other debts. Duffy estimated that Jefferson County would eventually receive about \$42,000 in delinquent taxes. About 46 families were being assisted in resettling elsewhere, thus saving the county and state money for relief.

RA spending must have given the local economy a boost, too, by injecting quite a bit of cash. As of June 30, 1936, after 23 weeks of operation, the RA had spent \$28,485 on wages, supplies and equipment and had employed an average of 183 workers per week.

If the RA was controversial in Jefferson County, it continued to be controversial on the national level for being too close to socialism. The agency's founder and administrator, Rexford G. Tugwell was dubbed "Rex the Red" by his detractors. Senator W. Warren Barbour of New Jersey called for an investigation into every aspect of the Resettlement Administration's activities. In lieu of an investigation, Tugwell was required to prepare an extensive report, which probably explains why the agency's *First Annual Report* is book length.

The next year's report, a mere pamphlet, was prepared by Will



RA crew building the "Stock Trail" to the Deschutes River, west of Round Butte (Rothstein photo)

W. Alexander because Tugwell had stepped down at the end of 1936. He did so more or less at the behest of President Roosevelt because the RA was suffering from Tugwell's unpopularity.

Tugwell left government service for the time being but later served as governor of Puerto Rico from 1941-1946. In 1957, he retired to Greenbelt, MD, one of the planned communities he helped create. In 1964 he relocated to California to work for the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, where he spent his time working out a proposal for a new US constitution, a version of which was published in 1970.

Upon Tugwell's departure, President Roosevelt ordered the RA transferred to the Department of Agriculture and in September 1937 it was renamed the Farm Security Administration (FSA). In October, 1938, control of the LUPs was transferred to the Soil Conservation Service.

These administrative changes resulted in some scaling back of RA programs such as group resettlement projects but had very little effect on the Central Oregon Land Utilization Program. Work on restoring land within the LUP for grazing purposes continued at least into 1938. The workers tore down houses, removed old fence lines, and put up fences in other places. They developed springs for stock watering and reseeded the land with crested wheat grass.

In March, 1937, the RA set up a 32-man work camp at The Cove on the Crooked River. The workers were to create a recreation area for local residents to enjoy. Funds for the work were limited, but they were seeding three acres of grass and planting 120 shade trees. They put in picnic tables, benches, and stoves and piped in water. The site, which became an Oregon state park, is now under Lake Billy Chinook, having been flooded when the dams were built.

Another major RA activity was poisoning sage rats inside and outside the submarginal lands. In 1936, workers spread eight tons of poisoned oats on 180,000 acres. The *Pioneer* said one witness had counted 200 dead rats along a half-mile of fence. In April of 1937, 13 tons of poisoned oats were allotted to Jefferson County. That year, the poison was to be spread from Gateway to the Crooked River by 40 RA workers together with lots of local farmers. Hawks, owls, and other predators must have suffered collateral damage.

In spring of 1938, Jefferson County held a farm conference. No doubt there was a lot to discuss and much of it probably revolved around the two massive government projects that would result in another transformation for Jefferson County in the next decade: the marginal lands program and the North Unit irrigation project, which had finally received approval and was—very slowly—moving forward. The committee reports are valuable because they sum up the agricultural community's assessment of current developments.

In its report, the Livestock Committee said that, "The completion of the Resettlement program without development of the irrigation project will not benefit the livestock interests to any great extent" because without irrigation the region can't grow enough supplemental feed to support livestock.

The Livestock Committee recommended that the submarginal lands grazing area should be available for locals only and that half the grazing fees go to the county to make up for lost tax revenue. The committee touched on the fact that east county residents had been advocating for the marginal lands to be set aside for wildlife only and hinted at some resentment among those residents because they got no benefit from the newly available public grazing lands. The recommendation gently asked them to compromise.

The Land Use Committee, composed of W.J. Stebbins, Leslie Ramsey, Guy Corwin, H. Ward Farrell, and Judge W.R. Cook noted that in the long run, the combination of the removal of marginal lands from cultivation and the irrigation of remaining

farmland would prevent future crop failure. They allowed that the marginal lands program had given the county a shot in the arm by the payment of delinquent taxes but had also reduced the tax base. So, they warned, the irrigation work must be completed quickly because without it, a couple of bad rain years could bankrupt the county.

Of course, the irrigation project was not completed quickly. It would be nearly 10 more years before Jefferson County farmers got their water, but in those intervening years, the drought subsided and they were able to hang on.

The work camp was closed in 1938, but the US Soil Conservation Service continued work on developing and maintaining stock watering resources, fighting noxious



After-hours: a harmonica-guitar duet (Rothstein Photo)

weeds, and reseeded crested wheat grass. Local livestock owners formed The Gray Butte Grazing Association in the early 1950s to help manage grazing permits and care of the land. The marginal lands were transferred from the Soil Conservation Service to the US Forest Service in 1954 and given the name Crooked River National Grassland in 1960.

Hard feelings about the marginal lands program continued at least into the 1950s. Despite County Judge Cook's protestation that he was cooperating with the federal government, in 1938 the feds had to condemn the land held by Jefferson County in lieu of unpaid taxes so that they could wrap up their land acquisition.

Not all of Jefferson County received equal benefit from the marginal lands project and there was a lingering belief that the land was good and could be profitably farmed once the drought ended.

The east county did not get irrigation, a federal bailout, or public grazing lands and its grievance was documented by Gladys Keegan, secretary of the "Ash Butte" Ashwood Grange, in a 1947 letter to Senator Wayne Morse complaining that some ranchers were getting cheap grazing land at the expense of other taxpayers. She also asserted that the land around Lamonta had produced wheat in the past and could do so again.

And in 1953—shortly before the submarginal lands program wrapped up and the land was handed over to the Forest Service-- Madras farmer Winstead Stebbins gave a speech to the Kiwanis club in which he asserted that the submarginal lands project had "failed miserably."

Among his litany of complaints: the value of the rangeland was declining because of invasive weeds and other problems; the program cost the federal government a lot of money and was not bringing in any money for the county; and the whole program was based on lies. The lies, according to Stebbins, were that there would never be sufficient rain for dry farming, that the farmers would receive fair prices for their land and that they would be resettled on good farmland elsewhere. Stebbins urged that the lands be returned to the county tax rolls, presumably by selling them again.

Howard Turner was present at the same Kiwanis meeting and remarked that "it could have been worse." Turner went on to say that he had attended a meeting in Portland at which the federal government proposed designating the whole county



Abandoned grain separators (Rothstein photo)

marginal lands. Turner and other Jefferson County representatives at the meeting urged the federal agents to hold a meeting in Madras, which they did (likely the meeting referred to above), with the result that the North Unit lands were removed from consideration.

In 1953, the pain of upheaval must have still been fresh for Stebbins. While it is difficult to ascertain whether he was correct on all counts, at least a couple of his assertions were wrong. The RA did help at least 49 families resettle somewhere else, so that wasn't a lie, although it is possible they

failed to help every family that needed it. And the submarginal lands have been used for grazing and recreation since the 1950s, so that aspect of the LUP has hardly been a failure.

But regardless of whether his individual points were correct, in hindsight it seems like Stebbins' overall conclusion was wrong. Would we really want families out there on the grasslands still trying to dry farm in our unreliable climate? Perhaps his blame was misplaced.

Homesteaders were inadvertently set up for failure by early federal land policy; drought and the Depression turned the mistake into a national crisis. The marginal lands program was just a response to a foregone disaster. Though the process was painful for those who lived through it, for much of the county the pain was offset by the boon of irrigation and the result was indeed a more sensible use of our natural resources.

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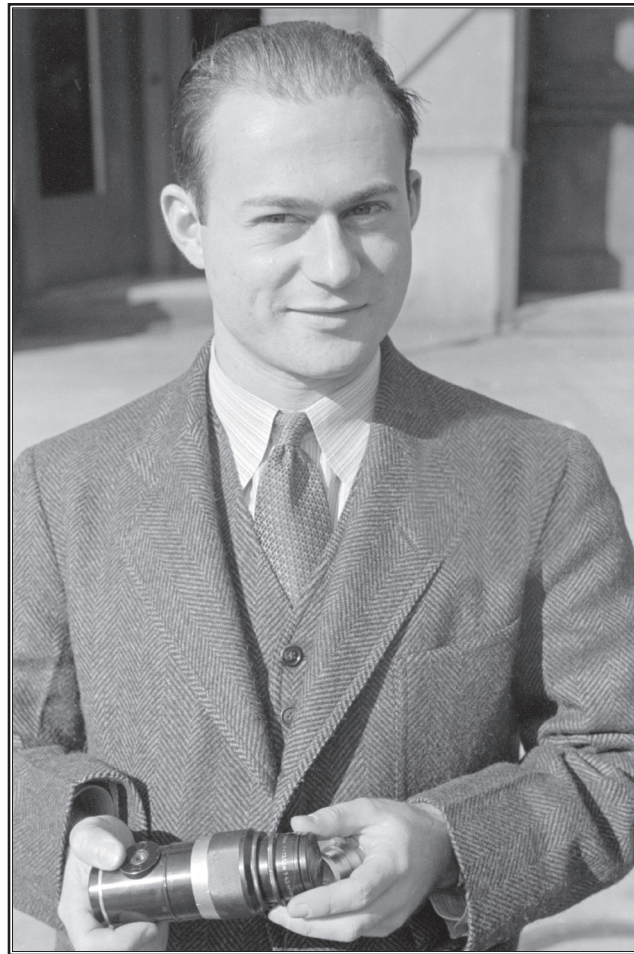
ARTHUR ROTHSTEIN AND CAMERA IN JEFFERSON COUNTY, 1936

BY JERRY RAMSEY

Soon after the “Resettlement Administration” work camp was established just south of Rimrock Springs, off the Madras-Prineville road, and the workers were assembled and set to work, a very young New York City photographer named Arthur Rothstein arrived to document their work for the RA. Years later, Rothstein remembered his trip Out West as an adventure, especially for a city boy: “I had a sleeping bag in my car, and an axe to chop down trees that were in my way. The back roads weren’t like those we have today. I had a shovel to dig myself out of snow and mud, a water-bag, and a Coleman stove to cook things on. I was pretty self-sufficient.” (*Documentary Photography*. New York: Focal Press, 1986, p. 37)

He was sent out by RA Director (and New Deal “Brain Truster”) Rexford Tugwell with orders to photographically show the plight of farming and farmers in this area because of drought and the Great Depression, and to highlight the steps being taken to reclaim the land for agriculture—meaning grazing livestock, not dry-farming, which was declared a failure, at least locally. On his way out west, Rothstein spent some time in Oklahoma, in the heart of the Dust Bowl, and his photos of a farmer and his two small sons walking in the wind and dust across what had been their farm have become iconic images of the Dust Bowl catastrophe.

Another set of photos featuring a weathered cow skull (taken in the South Dakota Badlands) became controversial when they were published in newspapers hostile to the aims and work of the RA. Conservative opponents of the program and the whole “New Deal” being enacted by the Roosevelt Administration claimed that the photos represented nefarious propaganda on behalf of its farm programs—the cow skull had been moved and manipulated from photo to photo, it was charged, to artificially exaggerate



Arthur Rothstein and camera lens; in New York 1936



William Spencer, “Chupalai” (Warm Springs Sahaptin) from Warm Springs, at the 1936 Molalla “Buckaroo.”

the effects of a bleak and ravaged rangeland. Rothstein later remarked that he hadn’t taken the photos with the purposes of the RA in mind at all; he was just, as an aspiring cameraman, trying out different locations and camera settings for photographing the skull! (*The Photography of Arthur Rothstein*, introduction by George Packer. Washington D.C.: The Library of Congress, 2011, p. ix. James Curtis, *Mind’s Eye, Mind’s Truth: FSA Photography Reconsidered*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991)

He was probably telling the simple truth of the matter—but the episode, which apparently blew up while he was in Central Oregon, serves as an indication of how strongly the New Deal’s radical farm policies were opposed by conservative interests in the mid- and late-Thirties. None of which seems to have interfered with Rothstein’s enthusiastic camera coverage at the Rimrock Springs work camp, and subsequently in the “Hooverville” settlements in Portland, and labor camps in the Willamette Valley—and even at the Molalla Buckaroo rodeo, where he photographed Warm Springs Indians in their dance regalia.

His camera-work was rapidly improving—he was using an early model of the pioneer 35mm “Leica”—and by the end of his time in the West at the end of 1936 he was already being recognized [along with his fellow RA/FSA (Farm Security Administration) photographer Dorothea Lange, who covered southern Oregon in the same time frame] as a very capable photo-journalist, someone to be reckoned with. In early 1937 Rothstein was

assigned by the FSA to photograph a remarkable Afro-American community at Gee's Bend, Alabama, where, unlike its resettlement and reclamation efforts in Oregon, the FSA hoped, through investment of financial aid and agricultural equipment and know-how, to sustain and advance a viable farming population. His photographs there emphasize the traditional folkways and dignity of the people of Gee's Bend. When the *New York Times* ran a long article on the community and its prospects on August 22, 1937, Rothstein's photos illustrating it were widely hailed as masterpieces of social documentation.

In 1940 Rothstein became a photographer for *Look Magazine*; with the outbreak of World War Two, he joined the U.S. Army Signal Corps, and covered the war in China, Burma, and India. In 1947 he became Director of Photography for "*Look*", and later, *Parade*. Meanwhile, his photos were appearing in major galleries and exhibitions in the U.S. and Europe, and he was teaching at Columbia and Syracuse. He authored or edited numerous books on photography, including two that are still widely used as textbooks, *Documentary Photography* and *Photojournalism*. Arthur Rothstein died in New York City in 1985.

His photos of the Resettlement work camp at Rimrock Springs and its activities are archived in the Library of Congress "Prints and Photos" division, and are available from there on-line. Considered as photos they are sharply detailed, beautifully composed, and, beyond their New Deal motives, rich in historical details, especially for Central Oregonians. They cover the Camp and its inhabitants, including the cook and his kitchen, a baseball game, a guitarist and a harmonica-player making music after hours; stark images of abandoned farmsteads and machinery, mostly around the Lamonta/Haystack area; and shots of RA projects—bringing in a spring, building a stock trail from Little Plains down to the Deschutes River, broadcasting (bare-handedly!) strychnine-laced oats to exterminate rodents on what had been a wheat field.

Oddly enough, he took no photos of such primary RA/FSA projects as demolishing abandoned buildings, tearing out fence-lines, and



William "Bill" Moore of Madras, cook at the Resettlement Camp (Rothstein photo)



Arthur Rothstein's own caption suggests his official mission in covering the farming situation in Jefferson County: "The sun sets on a broken wagon wheel, symbolic of the vain efforts to farm on the dry arid land of central Oregon." (Rothstein photo)

disking up homestead fields and seeding them to crested wheat grass—drill-rows of which are still visible today on the Marginal Lands portions of the National Grasslands. Perhaps such activities were not underway during Rothstein's visit.

As a boy, I knew the Rimrock Springs Work Camp as "the Rat Camp." It was where we sometimes spent the night with our herd of cows while trailing them from the Fox and Kutcher "Gray Butte Grazing" pastures east of Madras, south to the Grey Butte pastures. The remaining buildings by this time (the early 1950s) were so infested with packrats that trying to sleep in them was impossible.

And in fishing season, my family and others made good use their stock trails, the one down to Crooked River below the RR Bridge, and the other starting west of Round Butte and leading down to one of the best fishing spots on the Deschutes, a true "glory hole" known as "Big Eddy," now alas forever submerged behind Round Dam.

Were there pack rats already at Rimrock Springs Camp when Rothstein stayed there over 80 years ago? Was he lucky enough to follow the then-new Stock Trail down to Big Eddy, and sample the splendid fishing there? Unanswerable questions—but what is ponderable now is how his remarkable career as one of the premier photographers of the twentieth century did really begin in part in Jefferson County, as he endeavored to convey the

calamity of farming here in 1936, and the New Deal's controversial efforts to save agriculture locally and elsewhere in the West and Midwest.

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Controversial Novelist Visits Madras in 1934

On another dry, glary morning in the third week of August, 1934, a famous author visited Madras, Oregon. He was Erskine Caldwell, at 31 the author of two scandalously revealing novels about poor white Southerners, *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre*.

He came to Madras on purpose: after an unsatisfactory stint of script-writing for Hollywood, Caldwell (accompanied by his wife Virginia) set off from Los Angeles in a new Ford convertible to see and report on the plight of ordinary Americans, farmers and city and country wage-earners, struggling in their different regions to survive the Great Depression. Over several months, starting in Madras (why here is unknown, but why not?) he took soundings in Spokane, Montana, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri.

Then, after an interlude with his family at their home in Maine, Caldwell resumed his social investigations in his native back-country Georgia, and wrote the scathing accounts of the collapse of tenant farming and sharecropping there that make up the last section of a remarkable but forgotten book about his cross-country travels, *Some American People* (New York: Robert McBride, 1935). The middle section of the book, titled "Detroit," covers an earlier 1934 visit to the automobile factories in Michigan, where he found grim evidence that Ford and other car-makers were exploiting their workers with untenable wages and unhealthy working conditions. The book's first section covers what he found in the West and Midwest, beginning with his chapter on Madras, titled

"On the Range."

Like many of his contemporary writers in the Thirties, Caldwell had socialist leanings; in fact the articles collected in *Some American People*, including the essay on Madras, were originally commissioned by *The Daily Worker*, the newspaper of the American Communist Party.

"On the Range," by Erskine Caldwell

In Central Oregon, on the eastern slope of the Cascade Mountains, the shriveled grass is lying on the range like scraps of steel shavings. A gust of hot wind sweeps down to earth, and with your ear to the ground you hear a sound like somebody kicking rusty springs through the wiry brown grass.

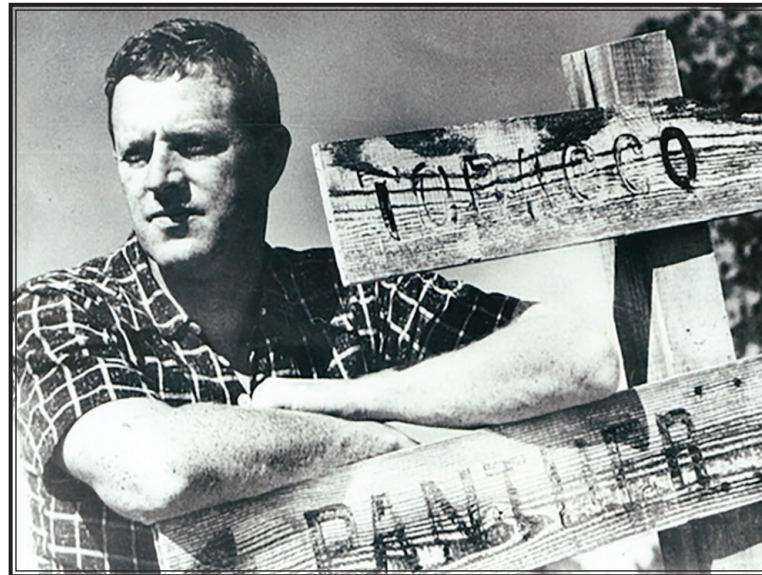
Over on a hillside the wind is making ripples on the dusty contour of the range; down below, in the pocket of a dry stream bed, the wind is carving precise images on the drifting sand.

The rainfall has been normal; the trouble is that normal

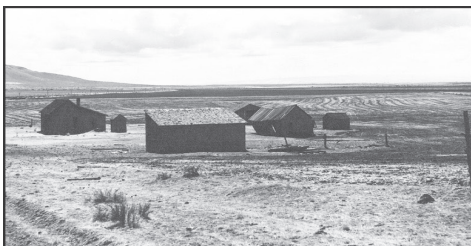
is not enough. Fifteen inches a year will never be enough even to settle the dust, whether it be in Oregon or Arizona or California.

At ten o'clock in the morning all the stores in the town of Madras that were going to open, had opened. Half of them have been vacant and boarded shut for nearly a year; the hardware merchant and the drygoods merchant couldn't get by on just taking in each other's washing.

A man has come up from somewhere and sits down on the step of a boarded-up store building. Overhead on the second-story false front—the dashboard—the few remaining



Erskine Caldwell, around 1933



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Madras, Main Street (5th) looking north, later 1930s (JCHS Archives)

flakes of paint inform you that clothing for the family was sold there once. The man on the step is wearing faded blue denim pants, a colorless, soiled white shirt, and dusty brogans. It has been two months since he last had a haircut.

You walk a block in Madras, in any direction, and you are on the open range. As far as the eye can see, the rolling earth extends mile after mile towards an infinite horizon. The brown sod is frequently broken by squares and ovals of dusty, drifting fields. They look as if they might be tumbled-over tombstones, once erected to the faded hope of dry-farming.

Back from the range, you are still on the range, in Madras. The man on the step has not moved in an hour's time. He still sits looking out into the deserted street. Perhaps his hair is a little longer, perhaps not; but you can't help thinking that it hangs a little lower around his neck.

You raise a hand in greeting, but receive no response. You have elected to come to Madras, and you must accept the

permeating silence of the range.

Behind the man, on the dusty windows, the lettering says it is Johnson's Store. Wiping away some of the accumulated dust, you press your face against the glass, shading your eyes with your hands, and try to see inside. The interior of the place has the appearance of the variety store at home the morning after Christmas. Empty boxes, scraps of paper, and bare shelves show that it has been stripped clean of its wares.

You take a seat on the step beside the man. "Who owns this store?"

The man on the step spits into the street. "If you mean the four walls, I reckon the bank does."

"Who owned it before the bank took it over?"

"I used to think I did."

You settle yourself on the step beside Johnson. You spit into the street, and fall into his silence for a while. Two or three automobiles rumble past. It is nearing the noon hour.

You begin wondering presently, aloud, if there is much activity on the range around Madras since the Government shipped the cattle out.

"How can there be?" Johnson says. "A man would be a fool to ride out and go through the motions of herding cows, when there ain't a cow in sight. Now, wouldn't he?"

"That's right. But people have got to do something."

"Not these people," Johnson says. "Not here."

You get up and look at your watch. It is a long drive to the Columbia River. "Everybody can't live on the Government," you suggest. "Probably a lot of ranchers will get together some herds in the spring."

"Maybe," Johnson replies. "But by spring I don't look for more than a handful of folks around here. People are going to follow the cows. That's what brought me here, and I reckon I'm pretty much like everybody else."

"That sounds like good reasoning," you say, "because cattle-raising built up most of this part of the country. But a lot of people have got out of the habit of following the cows—they think they can raise wheat on ten to fifteen inches of rainfall."

Johnson chuckles to himself. "That wheat-raising business wasn't the people's fault. These scientific fellows who do their wheat farming in an office building with a stenographer sitting on their laps brought about all that dry-farming foolishness. Cows wasn't good enough for them. If they had come out and lived on the range, they'd have learned what the range is good for."

When you are getting ready to leave, Johnson calls you back to the step for a moment. "If you ever run across any of those scientific dry-farmers, tell them that about the most foolish thing a man can do is to break up the sod on a short-grass range. If they want to learn something, tell them that any country that grows rabbits taller than the buffalo grass is a cow country, and where the grass grows taller than the rabbits, that's wheat country." (Erskine Caldwell, *Some American People*, pp. 13-18)

Caldwell's approach to his grass-roots reporting was unassuming and casual; the main thing seems to have been to find someone to talk to who knew, and had opinions about, the local predicament, and create therefrom an honest, vivid impression of it. (Harvey L. Klevar, *Erskine Caldwell: A*

Biography. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993, pp. 150-152) He seems not to have known that in 1934 the long-frustrated local dream of irrigation was beginning to move its way through the "New Deal" bureaucracy of the Roosevelt Administration; it would become an official certainty in 1937. His view of the futility of dry-farming here with an average precipitation of fifteen inches misrepresents the problem actually at hand: in fact some dry-farming homesteaders had done pretty well with that much rainfall until about 1920, when the ensuing drought reduced it drastically, down to as little as six inches or less, year after year.

And his (and Mr. Johnson's) emphasis on cattle ignores the fact that sheep were predominant on the Central Oregon range into the 1920s—and were ruinously overgrazing the native vegetation before cattle became numerous here.

When Caldwell wonders out loud "if there is much activity on the range around Madras since the Government shipped the cattle out," he touches on a real item of current news in the community at the time of his visit. Having declared Jefferson County an "Emergency Drought Area" on June 21, federal officials (working through Oregon State [College]) published an official appeal to "the district farmer who does not know where the next rack of feed is coming from to feed his stock now being kept alive by foraging on the fields where feed is scant and will be practically gone by July." (*Pioneer* June 21, 1934). At the same time it was announced that the government would buy cows for \$20, yearlings

for \$15, and calves for \$8. On July 19, the *Pioneer* reported that farmers from Culver and Madras had already sold a carload of cattle, and between August 2 and 23, well over a thousand head were sold—apparently to provide beef for federal food-relief operations in Portland and elsewhere.

One imagines that after these transactions, there weren't many cows left "on the range," or anywhere else in the county, in line with Caldwell's essay. But facing into a winter with no feed for their livestock, after a spring and summer of increasingly scanty pasturage, selling off was a viable if painful choice, and most farmers here seem to have taken it in 1934.

Who was "Mr. Johnson," who was still haunting his closed, repossessed family clothing store when Caldwell came by? A check of ads in the *Pioneer* between 1932 and 1934 reveals

*You walk a block in
Madras, in any direction,
and you are on the open
range. As far as the eye can
see, the rolling earth extends
mile after mile towards an
infinite horizon.
The brown sod is frequently
broken by squares and ovals
of dusty, drifting fields.*

no likely candidates—on Main Street (now 5th) both Cashman's and Central Oregon Mercantile were still open in 1934, and both did offer some clothing, but if Mr. Johnson's vacant store is based on what Caldwell actually saw in Madras, it must have held forth without advertising before closing down. Possibly both Mr. Johnson and his store are composites of what the author observed, as "re-constituted", to use Caldwell's own word for his method. (Klevar, *Erskine Caldwell*, p. 151)

Was it as bleak, as hopeless in and around Madras, Oregon in August 1934 as Caldwell suggests? Probably, allowing for the exaggerations of his realistic/impressionist style, it was. The *Pioneer's* issues a few years later into the Depression were increasingly made up of page after page of fine-print legal listings of delinquent taxes and foreclosure-sale notices, mostly for farm properties. And a much more systematic and comprehensive account of the plight of farming in the county by a Portland journalist, Marshall Dana, in 1924, only a few years after the onset of the Drought and before the start of the Depression per se, paints a very similar picture of failing hopes and local folks leaving. (See "A Portland Editor Visits Jefferson County in 1924," *THE AGATE* 2, Fall 2014, pp. 9-17) But the situation Caldwell encountered ten years later was worse, because of its persistence.

Very possibly, dire accounts like his caught the attention of "Brain Trust" officials like Rexford Tugwell, the



Col. Fremont Smith Ranch, near RA work-camp, 1936

foundling Director of the "Resettlement Administration," who were energetically organizing agricultural rescue programs even as Caldwell visited Madras on a hot and apparently hopeless late summer morning in 1934. In any event, by 1936 the RA had established its Rimrock Springs work camp south of Madras, off the road to Prineville.

Eventually, of course, the cows, yearlings, and calves did come back on the range—and the dry wheat farming that Mr. Johnson denounced as misguided folly made a robust comeback just before and through World

War Two, leading to a record crop in 1948, just as irrigated farming was taking over here. By then, Erskine Caldwell was well established as one of the mostly widely-read modern American authors, and his days of grass-roots reporting in Jefferson County and elsewhere were over.

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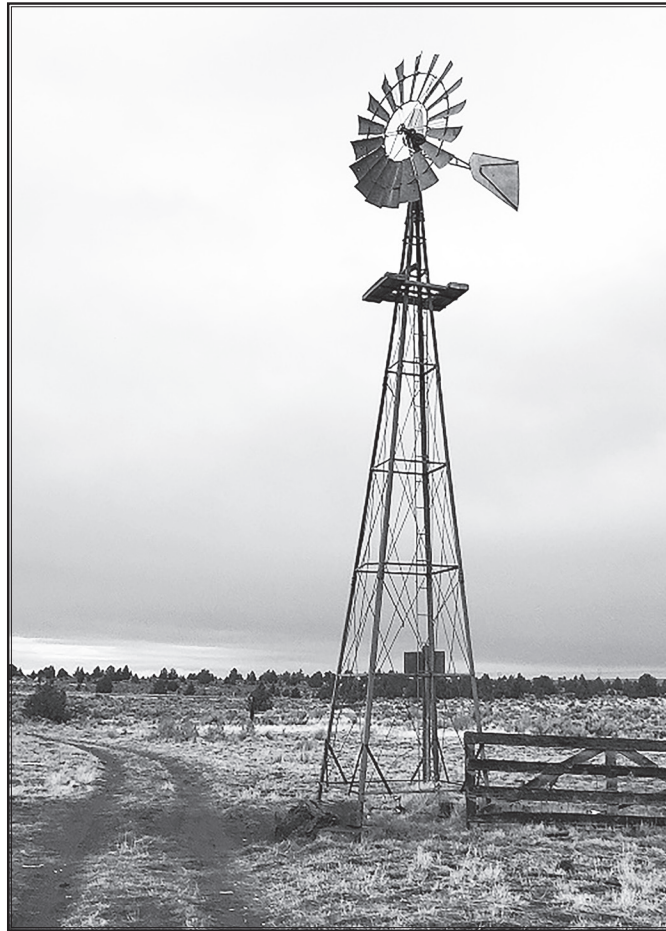


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RESTORED WINDMILLS ON NATIONAL GRASSLAND

A historic 1930s windmill “flies again” on National Grassland/ Marginal Lands off Highway 26 southeast of Madras. The windmill, on the Dayton Grant homestead site, was rebuilt recently by Jake Koolhaas and Gray Butte Grazing Association stakeholders with support from the Ochoco National Forest, which administers the Grassland. It honors the late Kay Corwin, former president of the grazing association and an early proponent of the windmill project.

A second windmill, on the Joe Weigand ranch site further south along Highway 26, has also been restored. Both probably date back to the 1930s and the federal Resettlement Administration’s



Jake Koolhaas and the Gray Butte Grazing Association recently restored two windmills on the Crooked River National Grassland



Crews work on the restoration project conducted last fall. The work honors the late Kay Corwin. The windmills are an iconic image of the Grassland.

work then to convert abandoned homesteads in the Gray Butte-Lamonta

area into grazing land (see articles elsewhere in this issue of THE AGATE.)



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Legends of the Northern Paiute.

AS TOLD BY WILSON WEWA, AND COMPILED AND EDITED BY JAMES A. GARDNER. CORVALLIS: OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017

By Jerry Ramsey

When I was searching for authentic traditional American Indian stories to include in my anthology *Coyote Was Going There: Indian Literature of the Oregon Country*, I was especially excited to discover the myths and tales of the Northern Paiutes. They were full of a kind of wild imaginative energy, even by comparison with other tribal Indian storytelling traditions, and although they rarely identified particular natural landmarks in the Paiute homelands, they vividly evoked a sense of vast, seemingly empty spaces—the Oregon Desert in words and action.

Knowing that the Paiutes in their seasonal travels ranged well up into Central Oregon (Peter Skene Ogden met up with bands of them camped on Willow Creek and Crooked River in the 1820s), I wondered if they told stories about this part of their territory. And I was perplexed that what I could find of recorded Paiute oral tradition was so limited—mainly one excellent gathering of stories, collected long ago by a folklorist, Isabel Kelly, who worked with informants around Burns and in northern Nevada. (“Northern Paiute Tales,” *Journal of American Folklore*, 31, 1932, pp. 676-209). Surely such a distinctive and expressive body of tales must have been recorded, elsewhere, I hoped, perhaps in unpublished manuscripts—and, best hope of all, maybe it survives in the ongoing telling of the stories by modern Paiute storytellers?

All of which will suggest why the publication of Wilson Wewa’s *Legends of the Northern Paiute* is wonderful news, for everybody who cares about Oregon history and culture. Wewa, a lifelong resident of Warm Springs and a direct descendant of Chief Paulina’s ally We-Wewa, has devotedly gathered and tended to stories he heard from childhood on told by his grandmother Maggie Wewa and other elders. In later years he chauffeured his grandma around to events and gatherings all over Paiute country, learning thereby “the lay of the land” of his people—where they camped, hunted, dug roots, celebrated; where Coyote, Wolf, Cottontail, Nuwuzo’ho the Swallowing Monster performed their mythic deeds. Such intimate

cultural knowledge is invaluable (when in fact it is preserved at all), and it illuminates every page of this remarkable book.

Legends of the Northern Paiute seems to me a true breakthrough, not only for the Paiute people, who have survived a lot of ugly Western history over two centuries, but in terms of our understanding and appreciation of Native American storytelling,

our nation’s oldest literature. Wewa’s achievement here is to create a way of presenting his tales in print so that reading them seems like hearing them aloud, as they should be. Getting them down on the page with this oral effect must have taken a lot of hard work; let’s hope that future transcribers and editors of Indian stories will follow Wewa’s example and method.

Some of his stories are versions of texts in Kelly’s collection, notably his accounts of the creation of the world and the animals (they emerged out of Malheur Cave), and how the seasons came to be (by patient negotiations, no thanks to Coyote). But several appear here in print for the first time, and two of these are set around Smith Rock State Park, where the people were apparently fond of staying when they were in Central Oregon.

They called the place “Animal Village”, because of the abundance of animals

that lived around there, and maybe also because the pinnacles and “hoodoos” that now attract rock climbers to the Park, looked like creatures, jumbled together on the skyline.

The most spectacular of these landmarks has been known to locals and visitors for many years as “Monkey Face,” for its simian features, looking south over Misery Ridge. But in Wewa’s account we learn that in mythic times, it was the Paiute Swallowing Monster, “Nuwuzo’ho,” who devastated the population of “Animal Village” until finally Coyote tricked him and turned him “into rock—Monkey Face. And he’s still at Animal Village today, still looking over that ridge for the animal people below, and still looking over the land he used to roam and terrorize.” (p. 42)

Learning this is one reason among many why *Legends of the Northern Paiute* is a must-have book for Central Oregonians, and all who seek authentic information about our Indian countrymen.



Wilson Wewa

Mud Springs Grange: New Life for an Old Building

Here's a puzzle: what historic building in Madras—soon to take on an auspicious new commercial use—actually combines two historic buildings from two other Jefferson County communities?

Solution: the Mud Springs Grange Hall (at 2nd and Culver Highway) incorporates the Citizens Bank Building of Metolius (built in 1911) and the old Grizzly Grange Hall. The Metolius building was moved to Madras in November 1938, a heroic procedure that took three Caterpillar tractors and four massive dollies, and required several days to cover the few miles between Metolius and Madras. The purpose was to create a new, centralized Grange hall, named “Pomona.” Some years later, after the Grizzly Grange formally disbanded, its meeting-hall was taken apart and reassembled in Madras to serve as the kitchen portion of “Pomona.”

New owners of this venerable and well-used town landmark are Rob and Fay Birky, who plan to re-locate their popular “Eagle Bakery” and shop in the facility. The Birkys intend to make the Bakery's entry-hall into an exhibit space in honor of the local Grange movement, an important element of Jefferson County's social history. (The Historical Society is helping them in this effort.)

Before the County was officially created, it already had Grange chapters in Opal City, Lamonta, and Haystack. Later additions were Grizzly, Mud Springs (1923), and Ash Butte (Ashwood, 1932). All of them were organized under the guidance of a professional Grange organizer from Opal City named Herb Keeney. The national Grange movement (officially “The National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry”) began in the Midwest in 1867, to promote good farming practices



Mud Springs Grange building is being remodeled and will house Eagle Bakery

and favorable markets for farm products, and to encourage community-building in rural areas—as it did here. From its beginnings, the national Grange movement stood for equality of the sexes, with men and women equally eligible for Grange offices. Locally, Mrs. Perry (Blanche) Henderson served as an early Master of the Mud Springs Grange.

So—a rousing “historical cheer and welcome” to Eagle Bakery in its new (old) home!

Sources:

Madras *Pioneer*, Nov. 24, 1938; Mrs. Eva Stebbins, “Mud Springs,” *Jefferson County Reminiscences* (Portland: Binford and Mort, 1957, 1999), pp. 174-177.

History Pub Features Epic 1977 Model T Journey

The latest JCHS “History Pub” celebrated the 1977 cross-America trip in a 1917 Model T Ford made by Dave Campbell, Dennis Hopper, and Kirk Metteer. The March 9 event, held at the Erickson Air Collection, drew over 175 enthusiastic guests. It was sponsored by Thomas Sales and Service, with craft beers and snacks catered by Great Earth. The program began with a dramatic “sunset”

entry through the Collection hangar’s west wall by the three intrepid (and now middle-aged) voyagers in their ageless Model T, and went on to an entertaining travelogue narrating their adventures cross-country (often on back roads) all the way to the Atlantic, illustrated by candid slides.


Stay tuned for future JCHS History Pubs. If it’s locally “historical,” we’ll probably cover it!



The Model T makes a grand entrance into the Erickson Aircraft Collection during History Pub.



The guys who made the cross-North America trip in a Model T in 1977: From left, Kirk Meteer, Dave Campbell and Dennis Hopper. (Pioneer photo)



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President's Message

I cannot contain my excitement for all the wonderful support this community has given the Historical society over the past year. Our outside events have been a huge success and hopefully you have had the chance to attend one or more of them this year. We had our very first threshing bee last August and a History Pub "Sea to Sea in a Model T." Both were hits. If you haven't attended any of our events, please watch for them and come learn about the history of our little neck of the woods.

April 7 is our Annual Dinner at the Senior Center. Our featured speaker is Wilson Wewa. Wilson is a lifelong resident of Warm Springs, a graduate of Madras High School, and a local Paiute traditional elder. The stories in his book came from his grandmother, Maggie Wewa, and other family members. "Legends of the Northern Paiute" is a break through event for the Paiutes of Oregon and for Northwest readers in general. It's the first booklength collection of Paiute stories ever, and in Wewa's skillful renditions in print, they seem



JCHS President Lottie Holcomb

like oral tellings. Some of them are set in Central Oregon, notably around what is now Smith Rock State Park.

Rounding out the evening will be entertainment by the Steve Fisher Trio with their wonderfully fun Irish folk sound.

If you haven't joined the Historical Society yet, please do. Fill out the form on the back of this Agate today and help us achieve our goal of making History great again!!

I hope you enjoyed this issue of THE AGATE.

Thank You,

LOTTIE HOLCOMB

President

Jefferson County Historical Society



Approximately 175 people attended the March 9 History Pub at the Erickson Aircraft Collection. The pub, which covered the 1977 trip across the country in a Model T by three locals, was the latest in a series of pubs, where Jefferson County history is both explored and celebrated.

Recent Donations to the Museum and Archives

PAMELA NEWTON:

Hand-made girl's saddle (by Ray Olson)

RUTH TRAUT:

Old toddler's clothing

DAN CHAMNESS:

Books on Central Oregon history

MEL ASHWILL:

Local paleobotanical studies; drafts of memoir

New JCHS Members since September 2017:

BETTY COOK

ROD KLANN

TABITHA DAHL

SETH AND SALLY KLANN

MAE HUSTON

SUZANNE GRANT LEWALLEN

OLAF AND RAMONA JOHNSON

GARY WEHRIE

Donations and Memorial Gifts to the Society since September 2017:

DONATIONS:

BILL MILLER

RON AND KATHIE OLSON

RICH MADDEN

CHARLES CUNNINGHAM

ALPHA OMICRON – CHAPTER 115

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PLEASE JOIN US!

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MEMBERSHIP DUES 2018:

(Individual: \$25 Family: \$50 Patron: \$150 Benefactor: \$500)

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Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Membership (please check box):

☐ New ☐ Renewal ☐ Individual

☐ Family ☐ Patron ☐ Benefactor

(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