

# The Historical

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## Official Newsletter of the Talent Historical Society



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### The History of the 1899 Talent Community Building

For most residents of Talent, the Talent Community Building seems the center of community meetings: the City Council holds its meetings there, older residents regularly meet at noon to eat together, the City of Talent rents the building out to people who are planning family meetings. Before we all voted by mail, residents of at least two precincts gathered there to cast their ballots, in times past community dances were a regular feature of use. In short, the old 1899 school building is used . . . a lot.

So just what is the story of the Community Building? The building itself was constructed in 1899, and housed all student grades. On 9 March 1914, the Talent school board, after being approached by the City of Talent, agreed place the city's offer of \$1500,00 for the building and its adjacent property before the voters of the District 22 in a special election. The board members of the district at that time were Marion Tryer, C. A. Morse, Welborn Beeson Jr., and C. W. Holdridge.

On March 9, 1914, three notices were posted in and about the district: one at the Talent Post Office, on one an old store building known as the Cameron building property, and the third notice at "the old Brittan corner south of town. A key part of the agreement was that the City of Talent would supply water to District 22. The actual election was held at the school house (**the present Community Building**) on 11 April 1914 from 2 o'clock to 4 o'clock. The proceeds of the sale (the \$1500) was to be used to finish the new school house. (**This was the now demolished brick building which was being erected where the present Talent Elementary School is located.**)

The April vote drew twenty-six voters (20 for the sale, and 6 in opposition).

So what had the City acquired for its \$1500: Lots numbered One (1), Two (2), Three (3), Four (4), Five (5), Six (6), Seven (7), Eight (8), Nine (9), and Ten (10) in Block L of the City of Talent.

On 6 May 1914, the directors of School District 22 signed the requisite documents and sold those ten lots and the 1899 school building to the City of

Talent: the district clerk, C. W. Holdridge, the board chairman Marion Tryer, and the two other directors--G. A. Morse, and Welborn Beeson Jr. were signatories.

On 9 May 1914, all the directors appeared in person before E. B. Adamson, a notary public, and attested that the seal used by the board of directors was the official seal of School District 22, and testified that the instrument (**the document in question**) was the "free act and deed" of School District 22.

The actual construction on the new brick building which eventually replaced the 1899 schoolhouse was recorded as follows in the Mail Tribune on 16 May 1911:

"Work commenced on the new schoolhouse Tuesday morning.

Quite a gang of men are already employed in the excavating. The new schoolhouse will be a two story brick building with a cement basement, about 85 by 110 feet in dimension.

J. R. Robison and Edward Cochran have the contract for hauling the gravel to be used in the schoolhouse.

The water to be used in the construction of the schoolhouse will be piped from J. R. Robison's tank--the water supplied from a well with an electric pump. Mr. Robison has the contract to supply water for the school district for one year."

Apparently, after that one year, according to the deed filed on August '11, 1914, the City of Talent was to supply water to the new brick school.

According to a news article in the Medford Mail Tribune, dated 11 September 1911:

"School opens today in the old school house in Talent, as the new building is not completed. It is expected to be completed in a month. The teachers have been assigned as follows: F. C. Smith, principal, will teach the eighth and ninth grades; Myra Roberts, the sixth and seventh; Parthena Smith--the third, fourth and fifth; and Miss May Smith, the first and second."

Apparently, in 1911, Talent's School District 22 did not provide high school education.

**As one of the major sources of funding for the Talent Historical Society comes from the annual dues of members (\$20.00 for an individual), how about helping us by providing a gift membership to a family member or an interested friend. Our phone numbers listed.**

## **Museum Has Gold Mining History Data**

Members and other readers of this newsletter may be interested to know that the Museum has a considerable collection of mining data both in map form and in text material about mining and mining claims in Southwestern Oregon. Some data is also available from a bit farther afield, too.

One of the key maps is the Foster & Gunnell Mining Map of Southern Oregon, dated March 1904 which shows all of the claims in Josephine and Jackson County active at that time. This map is on display regularly in the museum.

The Gold Diggers 3rd Edition contains 64 pages of detailed maps covering the United States from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Coast.

The museum's Reference Library has additional information about mining activity in Southwestern Oregon. If one is interested in gold mining, check out any of these items:

Southern Oregon Mining Index U. S. F. S 1899 to 1932. by Ben Truwe has hundreds of pages. The notebook is four inches thick.

Mining in Southwestern Oregon: A Historical Context Statement. George Kramer 122 pp.

Assorted Items Regarding Mining Activity in Southwestern Oregon Between 1921 and 1931 (From the Mining Journal) 24 pp.

Bohemia Mining District (Douglas and Lane Counties) 99 pp.

Waldo Mining District (Josephine County) 36 pp.

Southern Oregon Mining Articles (22 articles) 64 pp.

Mineral Industry of Oregon. 1903 Dept. of Chemistry, U. of O. 89 pp.

Massacred for Gold: The Chinese in Hell's Canyon. By R. Gregory Nokes. 208 pp.

## **1963 Marked the Last Graduating Class from Talent High School**

In 1963 the last class of seniors graduated from Talent High School. After the spring of 1963, Talent area students graduated from Phoenix High School as a result of the merger of the two school districts. Pat Bentley, a member of the 1963 graduating class, and a retired Southern Oregon University professor, has created a tri-fold display of pictures featuring the class of 1963 now displayed at the museum.

Ray Parr was the school superintendent, and Loran Casebier was the high school principal in 1963. Pat has pictures of most of the faculty as well as a host of other pictures. Specifically pictures of the Girls' League, the class as freshmen, and as decked out in cap and gown for graduation, the Lettermans' Club, the Senior Skip Day to Brookings replete with bathing suits and the memory of two days of

of 2 inches rain for each day, as well as frolicking at Jackson Hot Springs at a different time altogether.

Pat has a nice photo of teacher Don Mitchell, long-time Phoenix resident and school board member, as well as a distinguished biology professor at Southern Oregon University later. She also has included a picture of the Farmers' Cafe, a memorable restaurant on Sieber's Corner. This class published the first Talent Elementary School "Flashback," a 1954 yearbook—a copy of which is now at the Museum.

### **Major 1911 Talent Fire Destroyed Much of Talent**

(Note the first part of this story as written by Pearl Dosier Scott some years after the fire discussed in this story.)

**The (main business) part of Talent was mostly wiped out in the early 1900's by a fire which started in the saloon. The fire department was made up of volunteer men pulling a cart with a hose around it, and against a big fire it wasn't of much force, but it was some better than the bucket brigade they used before it.**

**The fire wiped out the Wolter's block--that's where the big mercantile store was at that time-- but also the bank. The insides were all gutted by the fire, but the cement walls still stand where the bank and stationary store was. You know it now as Brothers' Family Market and Dukes and Duchesses Hair Style place**

**Talent, at that time, only had about 200 in the city limits for population in 1908, but lots of homes in the rural (area) that traded here in Talent. At that time there was (sic) no autos here, so you either used horses with what ever you had for them to pull or you walked.**

Notes: The material in parentheses above has been added by the editors.

**According to Jan Wright's book, Talent (part of the Images of America series published by Arcadia Publishing, c2009) this fire occurred on Tuesday, January 31, 1911. It destroyed the main business district of Talent which was located on Wagner and what was then I Street (today the street has been renamed Market Street—2014. The total loss monetarily was about \$30,000 in 1911 dollars, and the fire took out a shoe shop, hardware store, barbershop, general store and a bank.**

**The Ashland Tidings on Thursday, February 2, 1911, reported the event like this:**

**"Talent's biggest conflagration occurred early last Tuesday morning, resulting in the total loss of several business blocks with practically all of their contents.**

"The buildings destroyed were lined up on Wagner Creek Road, beginning with the Wolter's block on the corner. All this property is located adjacent to the Bell Hotel, and boarders at this house were among the first ones who discovered the fire, which broke out about 1:30 o'clock Tuesday morning. Included in the list of buildings totally destroyed : Wolter's store and warehouse, including the State Bank of Talent, Tryer's hardware store, J. F. Norman's barbershop and Conway's shoe store."

"The building occupied by Brown & Gooley, under the firm name of the Talent Drug and Furniture Company, was somewhat damaged, but the flames were gotten under control at this point. The loss to stock, however, was extensive owing to its hurried removal, quite a lot of it having been taken in a rush to a blacksmith shop nearby.

"C. W. Wolters owned several of these buildings, and conducted a general merchandise store on the corner. The bank was also in this building. His loss is extensive, estimated at from \$12,000 to \$14,000, with \$4000 in insurance.

"Conway owned the building he occupied, and his loss is nearly \$3000, with \$1000 insurance."

"Some fixtures were saved from Norman's barbershop, but his loss was considerable. The drug and furniture stock was also insured, the loss to be after returns are in regarding salvage.

"The origin of the fire is unknown, being a matter of conjecture whether it was occasioned by electric lighting wires or was the result of incendiarism. The flames were first noticed in the rear of Tryer's hardware store. Mr. Wolters states that he woke up about 1 a. m. and noticed the customary light near the bank vault. What he took to be a bank of fog in the street fronting these properties, was probably a pall of smoke issuing from the buildings.

"The bank vault stands in the midst of the wreckage awaiting the cooling off process. The outer shell of this vault is built of cement blocks, the material having been furnished by Potter & Son of this city, and as the walls are of double thickness, it is anticipated that the contents are intact.

"G. A. Gardner states that the town ws all lit up when he first noticed the fire.

“Although aid was summoned from both Ashland and Medford, destruction was complete before any outsiders arrived on the scene. Local residents formed a bucket brigade and worked like Trojans, a limited water supply being fortunately at hand in a nearby ditch.

“About 20 went over from Ashland, but they couldn't get away until about 2:15 a. m., and by that time the fire was practically over. In the meantime, the Medford call was cancelled. The people of Talent, however, are thankful for the outside aide so freely proffered.

“The blaze was the largest that ever happened in Talent's history, involving a loss of fully \$30,000. But the losers are alert, and undoubtedly the burned district will soon be rebuilt better than ever. A town that demonstrates its enterprise by erecting a school property worth \$30,000, is not to be deterred from replacing a loss to its business section in like amount.

“There are but two suggestions to make regarding this loss, one of them being to replace the burned-over area with brick or cement structures, and the other is to devise some sort of a city water supply for Talent, both of which improvements will undoubtedly come in due season, especially in view of the losses recently experienced.

“Word from C. W. Wolters, received today, announces that both vault and safe of the Talent State Bank have been opened and contents found all right. A temporary building is already going up in front of the one recently destroyed, and it is only a question of a short time when the bank will be resuming operations pending the erection of a permanent business district.”

### **Talent Historical Society Board Seeks More Board Members**

Talent's city population is nearing 7000, and adding those folk who live outside the city, there is doubtlessly another 3000 folk living in the Upper Bear Creek and Wagner Creek Valley area. Currently, the Talent Historical Society Board of Directors has five members: President Bob Casebeer, Secretary Katherine Harris, and Board members Ryan Peterson (also a councilman), Van Tribble and Jan Wright (former museum director). The Society's "Bylaws" allow 11 board members. We have usually had 7 board members, but due to job transfers, death of some board members, etc., board membership has weakened. The Society's total members has increased to over 130 members, but about half that number live

outside of Jackson County. In short, we need more local board members. As a reader of this article who may want to help preserve the unique history of Talent, consider joining the five current board members and help steer the Society into the future: Contact any of the current members, or visit the museum during the four afternoons (Wednesday through Saturday) that we are open at 105 North Market Street, or call 541-512-8838 for more information about board membership.

### **Yes, We Do Occasionally Experience Earthquakes Here in Talent**

Recent residents to the Rogue River valley may not have experienced an earthquake since moving here. We rarely have them. Those who have lived here in Talent since 20 September 1993 do have vivid memories of the earthquake that was centered near Klamath Falls that September evening.

Minor earthquakes occasionally hit down here in Southern Oregon, but most of them are about 150 or so miles out in the Pacific Ocean. One can tell if a minor quake has occurred if they have to straighten the pictures on their walls, for most of our quakes are so small, most people do not feel them shake.

However, on November 15, 1873, there was a quake felt here in the valley according to Jacksonville's Democratic Times newspaper. Here is that paper's 1873 report to its readers:

“Last Saturday evening, at a little after nine o'clock, an earthquakes shook up the country rather severely. No damage was done in Jacksonville, however, except frightening everybody and causing a great deal of gossip. The shock seemed to be more severe in the country, as a Linkville (**note:** Klamath Falls) the earth was reported as having been cracked, while the chimney of William Kahler at Grants Pass was demolished. Josephine County was shaken up more severely, we are informed, chimneys being capsized and many other evidence given.

The earthquake seemed to have extended the length of the Coast, and advices as yet intimate that the damage was slight everywhere. Crescent City seemed to have received the severest shock, as the cornices were knocked from the houses and other mischief done. The vibrations seemed to be from north to south, as the shock was felt at Portland some time before they shook San Francisco.

This being the first earthquake which has occurred here, (**note:** First since Caucasians came in 1851.) everybody was, of course, excited. Several laughable incidents occurred, among which was the following: Several of our citizens were engaged in a social game of cards, and when the earthquake came, one of them, anxious to bolster up and save his house, rushed out with the hand that had just

been dealt him, which contained five diamonds and the “Jack of Spades.” Clubs happened to be trumps, and when Johnny reached the street, he deposited the cards on the ground, much to the displeasure of those who held a full hand of trumps and were in danger of being “stuck.” His house was saved; however the Odd Fellows were in session at the time of the shock, that they were obliged to adjourn. Thus ended our first earthquake.”

Interestingly enough, the precise date and even the hour of the 1700 quake was derived from knowing when its tsunami hit Japan, for the Japanese recorded its arrival on the coast of Japan.

### **What Shall We Do With Our Daughters?**

(Note: The following article appeared in the Davenport Iowa Democrat newspaper, and was reprinted in the Jacksonville, Oregon, Democratic Times newspaper on Saturday 3 January 1873)

The Davenport, Iowa, DEMOCRAT very sensibly says:

Bring them up in the way they should go.

Give them a good substantial common education.

Teach them how to cook a good meal of victuals.

Teach them how to wash and iron clothes.

Teach them how to darn stockings and sew on buttons.

Teach them how to make their own dresses.

Teach them to make shirts.

Teach them to make bread.

Teach them all the mysteries of the kitchen, the dining room, and the parlor.

Teach them that a dollar is only one hundred cents.

Teach them that the more one lives within their income, the more they will save.

Teach them that the further one lives beyond their income, the nearer they get to the poor house.

Teach them to wear calico dresses---and do it like a queen.

Teach them that a round rosy rump is worth fifty delicate consumptives.

Teach them to wear thick, warm shoes.

Teach them to do marketing for the family.

Teach them to foot up store bills.

Teach them that God made them in his own image, and that no amount of tight lacing, or Grecian bends will improve the model.

Teach them every-day, hard, practical common sense.

Teach them self reliance.

Teach them that a good, steady mechanic is worth a dozen loafers in suits.

Teach them to have nothing to do with intemperate, dissolute young men.



On Friday, March 29, 1889, the Ashland Tidings responded in somewhat similar vein with instructions for young men:

Teach them to build a fence scientifically.

Teach them to fill the wood box every night.

Teach them to shut doors in the summer to keep the flies out.

Teach them to shut doors without slamming.

Teach them to shut them in the winter to keep the cold out.

Teach them to do errands promptly and cheerfully.

Teach them to get ready to go away without the united efforts of mother and sisters.

Teach them to wash dishes and make his bed when necessary.

Teach them to sew on a button and darn a stocking.

Teach them to be kind to animals.

Teach them to have a dog, if possible, and make a companion of him.

Teach them to ride, row, shoot and swim.

Teach them to be manly and courageous.

Teach them to leave cigarettes and liquor alone.

Teach them to respect women and their intelligence.

### **Wild Fires Threatened Ashland Water Supply in 1910**

A recent donation to the Museum by the McGauhey family from Bend of postcards sent to C. S. McGauhey in 1910 discussed the massive fires that struck the Siskiyou mountains and threatened the city water supply. This is what was written on the postcard on 14 September:

**It has been so smoky for a long time. We could hardly see the sun and for a while we thought that we were going to scorch the town, and it did come very near, only a short distance away. It reached our former house and was about to cut off the water supply where it runs through the flumes on trestles before it enters the pipes. Men closed their stores, and went out to fight the fire night and day. There was a hard wind and the smoke was terrible, and the fireballs were singing half the time. There were 2 or 3 small fires in town, but they got them stopped before doing much damage. They phoned all over our town for folks to use as little water as possible. It was quite a scary time. It is all over now, but plenty of smoke yet, and will be till it rains.**

Ashland's Daily Tidings first noted forest fires in Jackson County on August 1, 1910. At that date several fires were named: one on Glade Creek of the Little Applegate River, another on the headwaters of Foots Creek south of Gold Hill, yet another near Butte Falls which was three miles square, and one more near Pokegama in the Klamath gorge,.

By August 8, another blaze near Long's Lodge up the Ashland Creek canyon was found which had cut the trail to Mount Wagner, and forest fires were also noted up Yank Gulch near Talent and located on the ridge between Wagner and Anderson Creek.

The last of 45 news articles about the massive forest fires in Southern Oregon was posted on September 8, 1910, and the last of 300 soldiers returned to Vancouver Barracks on Tuesday, September 6. The first rain began falling at four o'clock, September 8, 1910. Fire fighters were paid 34 cents an hour. To put that in perspective, sawmill workers in 1910 were paid 14 cents an hour for a ten hour day.

### **Brief History of the Talent Historical Society and Its Activity**

The Talent Historical Society was founded in 1994 as a non-profit organization dedicated to collection, Preserving, and interpreting the history of the Greater Talent area here in Southern Oregon. The Society has assembled a number of historical collections—including diaries (particularly Welborn Beeson's 1851 to 1893 diary), Civil War letters, some 3500 plus area photographs, county-wide cemetery records, obituaries, oral history interviews, and local newspapers, especially noted is a 1934 to 1987 collection of Mae Lowe and Alice Burnette's Talent Flash mimeographed biweekly newspaper.

The Society which is located in the “old” Talent Library at 105 North Market Street provides several resources to the Talent community—at present we house the Talent Food Bank (Thursdays 1:30 to 5:00 p. m.), a place for the actors of Camelot Theatre to rehearse for their theater productions. We also house a small Sunday School child's class on Sundays while their adult parishioners are meeting in the Talent Library. We are funded by memberships, donations, and an occasional historical grant. We lease our museum from the City of Talent which has set our annual lease amount within the fiscal reach of our Society. About 1500 individuals avail themselves of the Society's programs and research annually.

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