



# The Historacle

The Official Newsletter of the  
Talent Historical Society

Volume 29 Issue 4

December 2023

## PIONEERING IN OREGON

By Marion Miller Bagley

*We received an generous donation of three books written by Marion Miller Bagley in 1960 from a granddaughter of a friend of Marion. This is the first installment of her book "Pioneering in Oregon". [The Bagleys moved to Anderson Creek Road in 1910]*

Something had to be done. Will was losing weight. He was worried and tired all time. He thought that out-of-door exercise would help.

There were five children to be brought up; he began to wish for a better climate for them too. An old friend, Dr. McFadden, had been talking to him with enthusiasm about Southern Oregon, where he had bought acreage expecting soon to give up a dental practice and go there to live. He would raise chickens for a while or plant pears, which were being raised there in quantity. All were planting them. The soil and climate was perfect for them, he related.

Will read up on the history of Oregon and found that the Klamath Indians, who were native there, were a strong and sturdy race. He thought it was just the place for the children, warmer and they could be out-of-doors more, too. Oregon was what we wanted.

The house in Duluth was big and expensive and we could sell it when we could. He hadn't much ready money but his credit was good and he had friends.

We would ask the family in Winnebago to take the children and Emma, William's nurse, could go with them to take care of them. He and I could go to Oregon and find a suitable place to buy. They agreed to take the children in Winnebago; a great deal to ask of them. We would rent the house, furnished, while we would be gone. So we packed the children's and Emma's things and sent them off to Winnebago. Will's friends generally thought it was a good idea even though they hated to have him leave. Dr. Touhy especially was in favor of it.



*Emma, William, Margaret, Helen, Elizabeth and Kilmer in 1910*

One night Will had gone up to call on Mrs. Matter and the telephone rang and Dr. Touhy asked where Will was and said they were expecting him at the Medical Meeting. I called Will and told him he was wanted. He missed two cars and arrived late. Dr. Touhy introduced him as "The late Dr. Bagley."

It seemed they, had planned a farewell party for him. They had a seal ring all inscribed which was to be presented by Dr. Magee with whom Will had worked many years, but Dr. Magee was too overcome to do it, so Dr. Touhy had to take over. Will has worn it the past year or two. They were all quite affected as it was evident they did not expect him to return.

A former patient of Will's had bought an orchard in Colorado, and Will wanted to see it and ask his advice, so we planned to stop off there on the way. Mr. Rittenhouse wrote pleasantly and said they would make room for us so we packed and got ready to start. Reservations were made for the whole trip to Oregon with stop-overs at Grand Junction, Colorado, Hood River and Portland. We got off to a bad start around the last of May. Our train was late and we missed connections at Minneapolis. Of

course our reservations were all off and had to be made all over again. This was only the beginning of our troubles. As we got on the through train. Will laid my new long handled long umbrella across the seat and someone brushed against it breaking off the handle.

It was hot in the car and after we had gotten into our berth Will rang for our porter and asked him to open the window. He leaned across awkwardly and I thought I saw something go out the window, but Will was sure I was mistaken. However, in the morning I found that the hammock which had held my underclothes was almost empty and my new corset, new handmade underwear and my stockings were gone. They let me go back to the baggage-car and open my trunk to find others.

At Grand Junction, in the heart of the Gunnison Country we got off the train and found Mr. Rittenhouse waiting for us with a horse and buckboard. He said he was glad to see us and as we climbed the hilly road to the mesa where his orchard was located, he regaled us with the history of their first days there. He said he had three dress suits and Mrs. Rittenhouse had seven evening gowns. They had also had a trunk full of solid silver wedding presents and as the load was too heavy they

# Talent Historical Society

The Talent Historical Society researches and preserves the history of the Talent area in southern Oregon

We offer a collection of historical archives to help local residents and visitors become better acquainted with our area's rich history.

We are members of the Jackson County Heritage Association; a group of heritage nonprofits dedicated to the collection, preservation, and interpretation of Southern Oregon's cultural history.

We operate a museum and meeting place located at:  
105 North Market Street  
Talent, Oregon

The museum is open  
Wednesday and Sunday  
12:00PM to 4:00PM

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P.O. Box 582

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Blogspot: [talenttowninflames@blogspot.com](http://talenttowninflames.blogspot.com)

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Editor: Ron Medinger  
[r.medinger@talenthistory.org](mailto:r.medinger@talenthistory.org)

You may submit your written work about historical Talent to be considered for publication in this newsletter. Our research library is ready for you to get started on an interesting local article! We are especially looking for more tales from early to middle 20th Century.



## Museum Hours Wednesday & Sunday 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.



### Memberships Since Last Issue

#### **New Members:**

Gwen Booth  
Bruce & Verna Edgerton  
Diane Glendenning

Luis Ibanez  
Amber Lotspeich & Julie Herzog  
Tammy Wilder

#### **Renewals:**

Maureen Battistella  
Tim & Judy Cebulla  
Ed Colson & Jennifer Laughlin  
Mike & Tammy Dalton  
Tessa DeLine  
Iris & Allan DeMello  
Stuart Douglas  
Margaret Duggar  
Cyrus Emerson

Ruby Garrmon  
Allen Hallmark  
John & Kittie Harrison  
David & Renee Heath  
Steve Isaacson  
Kristi Mergenthaler  
Rick & Yolanda Nagel  
Page One—Debra Moon  
Elizabeth Stark  
Jennifer Van Datta

#### **Lifetime Memberships:**

Susan (Hartley) Andrews  
Kathy Apple  
Joan C. Barnhart  
Claire Barr-Wilson  
Poppie Beveridge  
Jim Bradley & Patricia Remencuis  
Karen Carr  
John & Judy Casad  
Marla Cates & Jan Ritter  
Joan Dean  
Jerry Deubert  
Gladys Fortmiller  
Margay Garrity  
Lunette Gleason-Fleming  
Bud & MaryLouise Gleim  
Dale Greenley  
Greg Hartley  
Sue Hawkins

Joe Hunkins  
Kathy Jerman  
Carrie (Hartley) Jones  
George Kramer  
Jeff LaLande  
Jack Latvala  
Karen & Mike Layfield  
Marilyn Lee  
Matt & Antoinette Lichtenstein  
Edwin McManus & Family  
Michael Mills  
Consuela Montoya  
Janice A. Napoleon  
Nancy Olson-Jones  
Ryan Pedersen  
Wanda Perdue  
Brent Thompson  
John Wahl  
Claire Barr-Wilson

#### **Honorary Lifetime Memberships**

Jan Wright Tom & Susan Moulder Katherine Harris

#### **Additional Donations:**

Stuart Douglas  
Ruby Garmon  
Allen Hallmark  
George Kramer

Jeff LaLande  
Kristi Mergenthaler  
Rick & Yolanda Nagel  
Celia Sanchez-Serna  
Elizabeth Stark

THS is still in search of a new newsletter editor to succeed Myke Gelhaus, who passed away last April. Myke has been sorely missed and THS needs a volunteer to step forward to fill the position.

If you know of someone interested in history with a writing, or publication, background, please approach them about possibly filling this position. One should be computer literate with the willingness to help produce our quarterly newsletter. We use Microsoft Publisher as our main software program to produce each issue. Training is available for those not familiar with that software.

Please email me at [r.medinger@talenthistory.org](mailto:r.medinger@talenthistory.org) if you would like to discuss the position. You do not need to be a current member of Talent Historical Society to apply for this volunteer position. Thank you.

Ron Medinger

# PIONEERING IN OREGON

*Continued from Page One*

left the trunk of silver by the side of the road for a week before they could go for it. The Rittenhouse place was located on a mesa several hundred feet above the valley. He had chosen it because there was a good draft and they were safer from frost. It was an irrigated section and he had supervised the digging of the ditches. His neighbors thought he was wrong and insisted that he wouldn't get the water to run up hill, but being an engineer he had surveyed it carefully and knew what he was doing. He had had plenty of water and the orchard had done well.

The Rittenhouses had a three year-old daughter named Lois. She was a precocious child who called her father Walter and her mother Lois.

Mrs. Rittenhouse made us feel at home. They had even added an indoor bathroom. Will decided we would camp a week and he would fish in Holy Terror creek, a stream up the mountain a way.

We were able to secure a burro to carry our heavier belongings and bought food for a week's supply. Mrs. Rittenhouse baked us some bread and we started up the footpath. I was able to walk without being too tired longer than Will could at first, so we made good progress.

At noon we stopped for a lunch and rest, as it was hot weather. We took the packs off the burro and tied him securely and lay down and went to sleep. When we woke up we found that the burro had nosed into the food sack and had eaten all the bread, so I had to make pancakes or biscuits all the time we were gone. When we told Mrs. Rittenhouse she laughed and said she thought the bread was not very good, anyway.

Will pitched the tent on a flat place in the broiling sun and in the middle of the day it was very hot. He fished all day in the creek and managed to get enough small trout so that we had one meal of fish every day. We found out afterward that it was ahead of the season. I fished some too, and once I slipped on the stones and fell into the foaming water. It was shallow, but I got very wet. I called to Will who was a short distance away, but he didn't hear me. I scrambled out unaided and lay down on the bank to dry. After a while he saw me and said, "For Mercy's sake what are you doing there?"

We stayed a week; the burro waking us early every morning with his "Hee-haws", always ready for food. We then went back down the mountain and after a night's rest started on again.

Will was already feeling better and had talked over all the possibilities with Rittenhouse. In order not to miss anything we stopped at Hood River where a real estate man took us in charge. It was the middle of June, but as there had been rains and there was snow on the top of Mount Hood, we had to wear our night clothes under the others in order to keep from



WILL FISHING FOR TROUT

shivering. We looked at various small orchards and at last stopped at an imposing orchard of fifty acres. The woman who owned it wanted \$50,000 for it which was not within our means. She insisted we have lunch there, served impressively by a Japanese or Chinese. We learned the prices were graded according to the number of years old. Little pear trees a year old were sold at \$100.00 an acre, \$200.00 an acre for the two year olds and so on, with bearing trees at \$500.00 an acre. So we went on after

stopping at a vacant place to pick some beautiful big strawberries.

At Portland we took the Southern Pacific for the short trip of 250 miles Talent, Oregon where Dr. McFadden had his place. We wound over the hilly country with Will watching for a green place in the midst of the dry and burned country. All at once, as we were pulling into Talent, he caught sight of a green field on a little mesa a short way up the hills. "That's our place," he said. We left our things at a little hotel called "Work's Hotel" down in the town and finding that a man was driving up the way we wanted to go, we asked to ride with him. Mr. Petrie's two white horses started toward the green field on the hill. After we left the main road we wound around thru trees and pasture till we reached the house. We had seen a "For Sale" sign on the fence and Will was afraid it was already sold. A pleasant man met us at the door, his wife and several small children peering out behind him. His name was Purves, and his father had pioneered the land now owned by his mother and himself. He told Will his price, and Will said at once that he would take it. He had seen the draw up the hills and that there was a good breeze coming down the mountain.

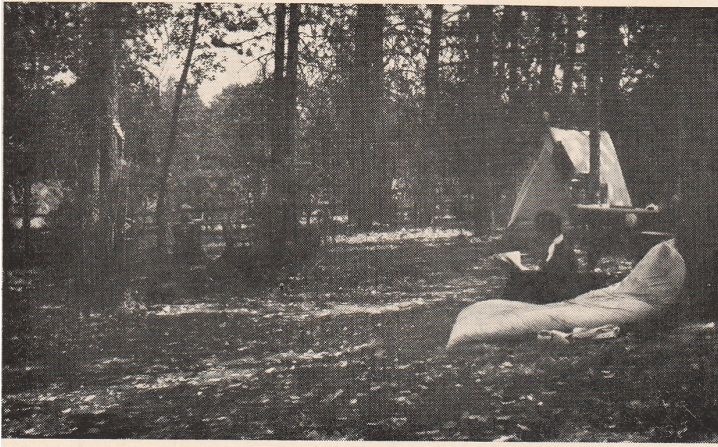
I had to have something to say about it so I said that I had a rooted objection to buying a place in the West unless there was some gold to be dug from it, my grandfather having been a 49'er. So Mr. Purves got a mining pan and took us up to the creek which flowed near the Summer's place and there he panned out a few flakes of gold for me. He added the information that an \$18.00 pocket had been found in the ditch next to the gate as it is now. So I gave my consent.

He took us back to the Work's Hotel, which we found was owned by a sister of Mrs. Purves. We spent an uncomfortable night there and Will had his plans all made by



Mr. and Mrs. Rittenhouse, daughter Lois and Our Burro

# PIONEERING IN OREGON



CAMPING IN THE WOOD LOT ON PURVES PLACE

morning. We would take our tent and cooking utensils up to the place and camp there till we could build a house, and in the meantime he would clear more land and get ready to plant pears. The Purves were surprised enough to see us. Mrs. Purves was hastily canning the Muir peaches. We set up the tent in a shady place in the draw and fixed a place for cooking. We filled a canvas bag with swamp hay and it

was a comfortable mattress, although it was necessary to rearrange the contents every day. About five acres of the quarter-section had been cleared and was planted to pears. Mr. Purves didn't care about fruit, as he preferred cattle, and of course there was the green alfalfa field that we had seen from afar. Will immediately hired Purves and John Briner to help

clear more land and they set to work at once. Some of it was covered with large trees making the work hard in the hot weather, and the men confessed that they were not used to hard work in summer. Will worked too, and found that two hours work was about all he could stand. He would come back to the tent and rest for an hour, perhaps have an eggnog and then return to work.

The work went on slowly. The Purves cows furnished us milk and we lived comfortably. It was my job to go to the Purves house for the milk and I used to walk carefully thru the narrow path uphill trying to avoid the "Sticker-grass" which always managed to get into my stockings and was hard to get out. Fortunately we wore cotton stockings then.

We slept well in the open air on the hay mattresses and cooked over the open fire successfully. I even managed to can 100 quarts of fruit against the time when the children could be there. With the small kettle I had it was slow work. We could get peaches and pears cheap. Will danced about while I worked and was sure the cans were not sterilized enough, and the fruit would not keep, but it did. I made quite a bit of jelly, too!

The wind from the mountain changed regularly at the same time every day, either up or down. I had pancake batter ready one day when the wind swung around and blew ashes into the bowl. I was annoyed and threw it out. Will thought me very foolish. "Why, a few ashes won't hurt anyone." He made some fresh batter and fried the cakes. When he had a pile of them the pan tipped over into the ashes, but he ate them as a lesson to me.

The Purves Family had moved away now, and we would have to build a house as their old house would be too small for all of us.

We found a young architect in Ashland who agreed with Will and he made careful plans for us. Will had used all his money to

buy an old lumber wagon without springs, a pair of old horses, one blind, a mower, a plow, and some other tools. We found there was a lumbermill up Anderson Creek road and went up to interview them. They were pleased with a customer and after Will had ordered considerable Lumber they asked us to have lunch with them. It consisted of potatoes, salt pork fried, milk gravy, and coffee. It was good. We hauled all the lumber we could manage with the old horses almost every day. It was noised around that we would build a house and carpenters, plasterers and bricklayers began to apply for work.

We hired a carpenter by the name of Combs, not too competent, but willing and eager for work; an old man named Hensley and his son about 18, who said he was a bricklayer, and proved to be good. He made the fireplace and chimney and the retaining wall outside the cement Gallery in front of the house. He was wide awake and a careful workman and belonged to the Union. He said to me one morning, "Pretty bad thing the Los Angeles Times did to burn their own building in order to blame it on the Union." "Who told you such a story?" I asked. "Oh, it was all in the Daily Worker," he answered. I couldn't convince him that it was a lie. A man who said he had done plastering a long time ago came also.

There were some trees growing in a circle on the top of the hill, spindling sprouts that had grown from the stumps of larger trees which had been cut down earlier. These grew to be big trees in time. The Purves' house had been out in front of them, but we decided to build our house back of them so they made a fine shade for the front of the house.

The ground was solid rock and a firm foundation was built on it. As the work progressed it became a very busy place. Will was kept busy hauling lumber from the sawmill and was gone much of the time. One day old Hensley said to me, "Ain't it too bad the architect made such a mistake about the rafters?" "What was the mistake?" I asked. "Oh, he made some of them six feet longer than the others," he replied. "I think that was what they wanted," I said, "they were to extend over the side porch, I heard them talking about it." "Well, they've cut them all off now," said he, "took them three days." When Will came he told them to nail them all together again taking three days more; six days to pay for. They hated to ask any questions as it implied they didn't know everything.

Now, as the Purves family had moved, their old cabin had to be put somewhere else as it sat right in front of the new house. We hired a man named F. E. W. Smith who was reported to be an expert in that line. He came the day we had to go to Medford to sign some papers. I thought we should stay there

## Talent Poker Tour #52



Thanks to everyone who came out to our tournament on September 16<sup>th</sup>, and congratulations to our winner David Heath. Our next tournament is scheduled for Saturday, December 30<sup>th</sup>. The tournament is open to THS members only, with a membership level of Family or above and pre-registration is required.

The No-Limit Texas Hold'em tournament will feature a buy-in of \$50.00 with all entry money paid back out as cash prizes. Refreshments and snacks will be available for a modest cost. This is a no alcohol/no smoking event.

Contact [info@talenthistory.org](mailto:info@talenthistory.org) or call the museum at 541.512.8838 for additional information.

## Reminiscing About The Talent Cafe

by Judie Bunch

It was in about 1970 that our family of five was starting to complain about the repetitious peanut butter and jelly sandwiches we were eating while our kitchen was being torn apart. "Go to the Talent Cafe in Talent. It's run by two little old sisters," our next-door neighbor, Donna, told us. "It's nothing fancy but you'll get a good meal for a reasonable price."

Where was Talent I wondered? We'd lived in southern Oregon almost a year and except for the playground at Lithia Park, Safeway for groceries, the outdoor swimming pool, and Briscoe grade school for Steve, age 9, and Paul, age 6, I was still finding my way around Ashland.

"Talent is just six miles from here; down Highway 99. Turn left onto Talent Avenue and you'll almost be in front of the cafe," Donna said. So, rather than scrape out the rest of the peanut butter from the jar, we washed our hands and faces, changed clothes, and trooped out to the car. Eleven minutes later we were on Talent Avenue in downtown Talent, population 2,091 people. In front of us stood an old-fashioned, large store building with a false front.

Inside, the room was full of diners. An oak table with chairs on our left, and next to the table, booths with high wooden backs that ran along the wall. In the middle of the room were several tables and chairs, and on the right was a long bar that might have served as a soda fountain at one time. A small elderly woman wearing an embroidered, red, and white checked apron, with apron strings tied behind her, white blouse, skirt down to her ankles much like both my grandmas wore, led us to a booth and helped me situate two-year-old Lacey onto the tall oak highchair. She said her name was Marie Long. Her

sister, Lila Parker, was doing the cooking that day.

They didn't use menus Marie told us. Today was roast beef with home-canned green beans, and mashed potatoes. After all the sandwiches we'd been eating, roast beef sure sounded good. For our information, she said, they offered a different main dish every day and always served chicken on Sunday. Adult plates cost \$1.75 including coffee, and today her sister, Lila Parker, had baked blackberry pies for dessert. Lila was famous for her home-baked pies. It cost an extra twenty-five cents but if you wanted pie, you should say so now in case they ran out by the time you asked later. Children's plates were seventy-five cents each, a glass of milk for ten cents, pie for twenty-five cents, and be sure to clean your plates or there would be no dessert for you. You had the feeling that she meant it.

In future days we learned that the building was originally called Hanscom Hall built in 1906 by Charlie and Daniel Hanscom as a town meeting place.

Their building was used for many purposes including meetings for the Oddfellows (I.O.O.F.) in the early years. Marie and Lila had started the Talent Cafe in 1947. In 1970 it was still going strong. As we waited, we looked around the room and noted the high ceiling, the bare Edison lightbulbs dangling over the tables from the ceiling on old, frayed cords, and the walls that looked like they had not had of a fresh coat of paint since 1947. Nothing fancy Donna had said.

Our hungry children began to squirm on their hard, wooden seats and Marie Long instantly came to our table sporting a heavy-duty wooden

spoon. We never knew if she was pretending or if she really meant business when she pointed the spoon at Lacey and said quietly but sternly, "Children must behave themselves." She then nodded her head at us and walked over to her station at the soda fountain. Steve and Paul's eyes were opened wide. Silently, they looked at us then watched their little sister anxiously. Would she burst into tears? Lacey could put on a screaming fit that nobody would ever forget. Would we have to leave before having our roast beef, let alone that blackberry pie? We all held our breath. Their dad smiled at the boys. I smiled, too, and reached a comforting hand to Lacey. Thankfully, the moment quietly passed and there were no tears or squirming at our table. The next thing we knew, Marie was bringing our roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy and we kept busy cleaning our plates down to the last green bean.

It took several weeks of hammering and sawing before our kitchen was in any kind of shape to cook a decent meal again, so we became steady customers at the Talent Cafe. One day was pork chop day, another was meatloaf. Sunday after church was tasty fried chicken but we soon found out that if you arrived a minute too late, the pie was all spoken for by the time you opened the door.

One time our neighbor, Donna, told us that Shakespeare actors and technicians also enjoyed eating at the Talent Cafe. From then on, I watched for them, but never saw anyone in costume, so couldn't distinguish one person from another. Once though, we did have a surprise while sitting at the table next to the front door. A man in a suit and tie came through the door, saw an empty chair at our table and asked if he could join us. Sitting down, we introduced our family and he answered, "And I'm Bill Patton." I think everyone in that room knew Mr. Patton. He was the general manager and executive director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

*Continued on Page 6*

## Hanscom Hall - Talent Café - Hermeticus Books

Paying the bill as we left always offered us a sense of delight. If Lila wasn't busy, she waited at the soda fountain counter, gave you the change and tucked the remainder under a rock. If she was busy, you made your own change and left the remainder for her on the counter. The Talent Cafe had no cash register.

In 1972 we heard that Lila Parker had passed away. Without Lila to bake those wonderful pies, her sister, Marie Long, closed their Talent Cafe doors for the last time.

*Hanscom Hall had a long history in Talent as noted in this article written by Jan Wright on her wrightarchives.blogspot.com blog in April of 2012. Later the Hermeticus Book Store had occupied the building until September 8, 2020 when the Almeda Fire swept through Talent and the historic building was finally lost to the flames.*

Located at 201 Talent Avenue, Hanscom Hall was built in 1906

has changed hands many times and been used in many different ways including a confectionary and ice cream parlor, a meeting place for Methodists and the Odd Fellows, a restaurant, a secondhand store, a grocery, an antique shop, a pottery studio, and today as *The Total Picture*.

Perhaps best remembered as the Talent Cafe, it was operated by Lilah Parker and Marie Long after WWII through the early 1970s. They offered simple but hardy meals in their well-known restaurant. People from all over the valley, notably the Shakespearean actors from Ashland, came to eat there. Customers had to eat everything off their plates to earn dessert.

In 1996 when the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, it was not known that the original construction was two-stories high. The photograph featured with this article proves that the structure had an upper floor and a staircase on the North side. The fire so damaged the top story that it has been a 1 ½ story building ever since.

When the picture was taken, the building belonged to the Wolters family, and it was one of their descendants (Jerry McGrew) who had the photograph and shared it with the author. Jerry did not have any idea that the picture was so historically valuable or that it was even taken in Talent. The photograph serves as a reminder to save and share old photos with the Talent Historical Society!



Hanscom Hall burning in 1912.

on property owned by Daniel and Charles Hanscom. The other buildings built that same year in Talent, a hotel, meat market, opera house, and livery stable are all gone but Hanscom Hall remains. It has retained the name of the original owners though it



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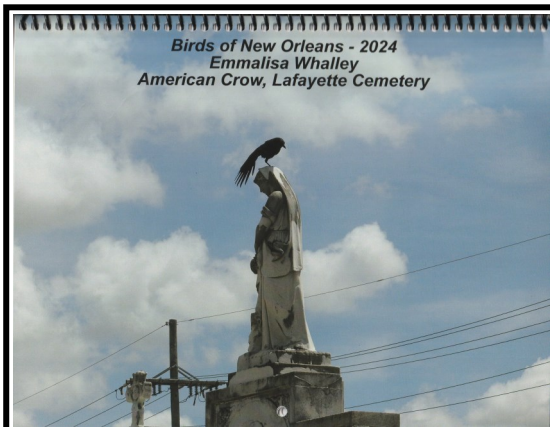
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Birds of New Orleans - 2024  
Emmalisa Whalley  
American Crow, Lafayette Cemetery

Board Member Emmalisa Whalley's 2024 Bird Calendar is currently available in Museum Gift Shop for \$12.00. Make sure to pick yours up before the limited run is gone!  
For 2024, Emmalisa is sharing bird photos from her recent trip to New Orleans.

The Talent Historical Society is a qualified Oregon Nonprofit participant of the Oregon Cultural Trust, and we encourage your support of this innovative, uniquely Oregon organization For more information,

**Talent, Oregon**  
**The Almeda Fire**  
A Documentation  
by the Talent Historical Society

**Talent, Oregon**  
**El incendio Almeda**  
Una documentación por la Sociedad  
Histórica de Talent

Talent Historical Society still has copies of its Almeda Fire documentation project, a 303 page volume with photos and stories of those affected by the 2020 wildfire. They are available at the historical society museum for \$25.00 each.

**FLIGHT OF TIME**  
**From the Medford Mail Tribune**  
**August 7, 1989**

1 YEAR AGO—Wildlife Images of Grants Pass is being filmed for a TV documentary feature on “Conserving America.” (1988)  
5 YEARS AGO—The Medford Masonic Lodge anticipates completion of its very own Masonic Temple meeting hall. (1984)  
10 YEARS AGO—The Medford Water Commission opposes use of fire retardant on the city’s watershed. (1979)  
20 YEARS AGO—Medford City Council approves development of a proposed Medford Mall east of Crater Lake Interchange. (1969)  
30 YEARS AGO—The explosion of a truck carrying six tons of dynamite levels downtown Roseburg, killing or injuring scores. (1959)  
40 YEARS AGO—A grass and brush blaze in the Blackwell Hill district guts the historic Tolo School. (1949)  
50 YEARS AGO—Louis Pefley is missing 50 pounds of watermelons from his City Limit Fruit Stand south of Medford. (1939)

**OREGONIANS HOLD A UNIQUE POWER FOUND NOWHERE ELSE IN THE COUNTRY - THE CULTURAL TAX CREDIT.**

By matching any qualifying nonprofit donations you’ve made this year to the Oregon Cultural Trust, you can earn up to 100% back as a state tax credit. This means supporting Oregon culture becomes practically free. Visit [culturaltrust.org](http://culturaltrust.org)

60 YEARS AGO—Dr. Bagley, founder of the Talent Cannery, visits friends in the Eden Precinct. (1929)  
70 YEARS AGO—Campbell Soup Co. orders train car loads of Rogue River Cannery’s tomato puree. (1918)

Compiled by P.C. Traver, the Mail Tribune’s librarian.

**Volunteers needed!**  
*Your friends who currently volunteer at our local historical society are falling behind and need your help!*  
*Please read the announcement below in the red box and help us find these much needed volunteers.*  
**Thank you!**

**Volunteer positions available at the Talent Historical Society include:**  
*Board Members; Secretary; Newsletter Editor; Librarian; Accessions Intake Data Entry; Article Contributors for the Historacle; Museum Cleaners; Tuesday Evening at the Museum Coordinator; Museum Docents.*

**If you would like to help us keep our museum open and healthy and have an interest in any of these positions, please contact us by emailing [info@talenthistory.org](mailto:info@talenthistory.org) or leave a message on the museum phone at 541.512.8838 anytime.**

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## PIONEERING IN OREGON

and see that the house was moved and in the right place. "Oh, we can trust Smith I am sure," said Will, so we went to Medford. When we got back the house was moved and so were all the lower branches of two beautiful big pine trees which were in the way as he moved the house too far down the hill, And, of course, the trees lost much of their beauty. Trees are not important to the Oregonians. There were many things that went wrong. The man who laid the laths set them too near together so that they didn't hold the plaster, which kept falling out for years. The shingles were to be green and so they were to be dipped. The boy hired for the work was very slow, so I took over the job and finished. One of our neighbors claimed to be an expert shingle, so Will gave him the job to direct that work. He had a clever little trick of nailing a slanting stool to the roof on which to sit, moving it along as he worked. It was necessary to nail thru the roof boards and later when the rains came every nail hole leaked, spoiling the plaster as well. Will hauled the big ceiling joists from the lumber-mill. They put them right up, green as they were we feared they might warp, but they remained straight and Will was very proud of them.

We oiled the outside of the house with linseed oil and later the floors with it, after adding a little reddish color. I mixed the color for the inside while Will worried for fear I should be unable to match the color each time I mixed it.

We told Mr. Combs that we would bring back heavy building paper to put between the outside boards and the lining ones and not to put on the inside lining till we returned. He found himself out of work so he went ahead, as he still had nails, and nailed on the lining boards. In consequence, when we heated the house, the boards shrunk and the cracks let in the cold air.

It was now time to go back after the children so they could begin school on time.

We left old Hensley to take care of things, feed the horses and two pigs Will had bought of Purves, and took the train for Duluth.

Our tenants had left, and the children came up from Winnebago with Emma. They had had a nice summer and all were well. Kilmer had been leading a horse that was sharp-shod and it had stepped on his bare foot, so he was minus a toe. Now there was packing and we hired packers to handle the furniture which we were taking with us. Will had found a man whom we could take with us to help handle the work on the ranch. Carl Mellin was his name. He had a wife and small girl the age of William. He had been in the Spanish-American War and an orderly to his Captain, who had seen that he was taught to read and write English. He came to the house and Will introduced him. He made me a deep foreign bow. He was smart and looked capable. He was to travel in the big car with the

furniture and take care of the animals. Will had added two cows, a yearling full-blood bull, some turkeys, chickens, seed corn, a Blacksmith's forge, a serving-machine and a quantity of tools of all kinds which he thought we should have on the ranch. Carl was to live in the car. Will generously loaned him my nice portmanteau, which I had had in Europe, and when I got it back it smelled of old cheese and was badly battered. Mrs. Mellin and the little girl went with us.

The day came when we were to start. The big car was loaded. We were ten in number with 22 hand packages, as we carried lunch for the trip. As we climbed aboard the train, Will was not in sight. I had no tickets nor money and as we pulled out of the station I was uneasy. But Will appeared as we came thru the yards and I felt safe.

Margaret and Elizabeth Mellin were both carsick and had to have a whole seat each to lie on. We had to wait in the station in Minneapolis two hours for the through train. The children were sleepy and tired when we got in line to board it at nine o'clock. We made quite a procession and people in the station laughed at us. "They think you are a Mormon." I said to Will, "with three wives!" He walked first carrying Margaret, then Emma with William, then Mrs. Mellin carrying Elizabeth. I led Elizabeth, and Helen and Kilmer brought up the rear carrying bags. Two porters came then also with more baggage. On the train Margaret and Elizabeth had to lie down all the time so the rest of us crowded in where we could. Emma and I had lunches to get ready at intervals too. Mrs. Dancer and Mrs. Matter had helped us put up a lunch, making sure we didn't suffer for food.

We reached Spokane about seven in the evening, and as the berths were all made up and the car open, Emma thought we should put the little children to bed. When the train started and the Conductor came thru about nine he said, "Who are these children?" Will produced the half-fare tickets for Helen and Kilmer but the conductor was not satisfied and said to Elizabeth, "How old are you little girl?" "Six," she piped up. Her birthday had been the day before. So another half-fare was paid.

When we reached Portland we had to change again for the Southern Pacific. We had to wait all day for this. The Mickelson girls, Mrs. McGinness and Mrs. Meyers, came to the station to see us. I had carried some fresh eggs and had one cooked for Margaret as she had eaten nothing on the way so far.

We got on our Pullman about nine P.M. only to find two young couples occupying our section. The conductor didn't come thru for an hour as it was a long train and

we perched anywhere we could with baggage piled all around us. He found that they were in the wrong car and we went thankfully to bed. We reached Talent the next morning and found some way to get to the ranch with all the baggage except Will's medicine case, which went to San Francisco before it got back to us. Mr. Hensley was glad to see us, and we found everything all right except that Mr. Combs had put on the lining boards. Of course the furniture car had not come, and we got a wire from Carl saying he had been delayed in Iowa as the cows had to have the T.B. test in order to be allowed to go thru the state. So we made ourselves beds of alfalfa on the floors and with blankets we slept well. Next a wire came from Carl from Portland saying that they wanted another \$100.00 on the furniture car. This was a blow as there was not much money left. When the car came and all was moved to the ranch, we settled ourselves into permanent quarters. The Mellins took the old Purves house which F.E.W. Smith had moved back to the edge of the orchard land. The animals went to the barnyard, the chickens into temporary quarters, and the turkeys roosted in the trees around the back yard. Soon the men built a shed for the Blacksmith's forge and one for the chickens. We placed nice poles for the turkeys, but they preferred the trees. It was a sight to see them all flutter down in the morning and then march up and clown thru the alfalfa field catching the grasshoppers.

We had a cook stove in the kitchen and the fireplace for warmth. I was too busy to stop to warm my feet, which felt the chill of the cold floors as the fall weather came on with its attendant rains. I had a bad case of Chill Blains, making life near the fireplace at night a miserable time for me. We had brought nice linoleum for the kitchen, but put it down without cement and it wore out soon. In the rainy weather the clothes hung in lines on the porch often for a week without drying, and as there was no grass about the house there was mud all the time. We did have a big woodshed and lots of wood.

Saturday night baths were in order. We heated the water in a boiler on the kitchen stove and had the baths in a tub beside it. The children got their baths first, then Will. When it was my turn the fire was out and the kitchen cold, as well as the bath-water.

The Mellins were comfortable in the Purves cabin and Mrs. Mellin scrubbed the whole house every day often making it seem damp. Carl plowed with the old horses and soon they began to plant little pear trees in carefully laid out rows. A row of Cling peaches was planted down the center of every two rows as they would bear before the pears and could be pulled up when they began to crowd the pears.

The children had started in the Wagner Creek School about three quarters of a mile away. They had to go thru about a block of orchard,



## PIONEERING IN OREGON

climb a stile over the fence, walk a block thru a pasture, and then about a half mile down the main road to the school. The teachers were Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler. Wheeler was the daughter of John Robison and had a High School Certificate, and Mr. Wheeler an Eighth Grade one. They lived in a tenthouse on the school grounds. They were earnest and careful and the children learned.

Mr. Wheeler thought Elizabeth was too small for the long walk but I assured him she was equal to anything the other two were. She learned everything in the books. I took a hand with the spelling and she was always on the high list. I had told her not to let any of the little boys touch her and she came home one day to say she had kicked and scratched a little boy who had tried to kiss her so that he went home bawling. She wasn't bothered again. I had made them little capes with hoods of cravenettes and they were a cunning pair when the rainy days came.

They were well taught and we were satisfied with their process. Helen and Kilmer both skipped the 4th grade and never missed it.

We were much amused by the girls names. Ima, Ina, Ila, Erma, all from books, with scarcely a common English name among them. We went to all the Spelling-bees and special days and soon knew them all by name.

The local women didn't sew much as they had too much other work to do but bought much from the catalog houses, Sears and Montgomery Wards. Kilmer said to me one day, "Mother what's the matter with these folks? The buttons are all coming off the girl's dresses and the button holes are torn out."

New Singing-books were handed out, much to the girl's delight. One night they brought one home and sang thru all the songs without stopping.

A class in cooking was asked for and Mrs. Lynch was to head it. After Helen had had her first lesson she wanted to show what she had learned. She pared a potato, cooked it soft, then mashed it and that was that. The class didn't last long, We made bread from the winter wheat flour with oatmeal added. It was very fine whole wheat, from Fischer's in Seattle, but we always seemed to have a hole in the middle of the loaf. Will solved the problem for us, finally, by suggesting that we were letting it rise like white flour, and that perhaps, if we put it in the oven sooner with a hotter temperature to begin with that it

could bake thru without trouble; so the day was saved. We baked every other day as the children carried lunches to school and it took a great deal of bread. We found out, too, that the other children often swapped a hard-boiled egg for a slice of our bread, which they liked. Families there baked sour cream biscuits which they called "Hot Bread" and these are tasteless when cold. We



WAGNER CREEK SCHOOL

used dry yeast at first, but after a year or two we were able to get the Fleischman yeast and that was better. Some 27 loaves of bread a week were eaten.

The Mikelson girls came down from Portland to see us. Mrs. Meyers bought one of my Gloucester water colors. I bought it back a few years ago and gave it to Janna. It had faded a little in 45 years but was still beautiful.

One day in the first Winter, we saw a heavy-set man with a pack on his back climbing the road to the house. Will said, "If I didn't know it was impossible I would think that was Nordin." It was. He couldn't stand not being able to see Will. Nordin was an old lumberman whom Will had cared for for years. Mrs. Mellin said, with great forethought, "We will take Nordin at our house." He came to us for his meals, though.

He was full of ideas for the ranch. He planted rows of vegetables, and he made Carl take them to Ashland for sale. Carl made us get up every morning at Four so the vegetables would be fresh and look nice.

The irrigation ditch ran just behind the house about six feet wide and in irrigation time had five feet of water in it. It kept the yard muddy and was a danger to the younger children. Will decided to change its course so it would be farther from the house. The children had to

cross it on the way to school and Kilmer often tried to jump across it and landed in the mud.

It would require a lot of digging, so Will hired three men and Nordin made a fourth. They said they wouldn't be able to get along with a cold lunch so Will agreed to feed them. They knew we had Emma and took advantage of it. So for a month four muddy men came into the kitchen every noon and into the living room. One was able to wear Will's slippers and wore them all out. The others wore hob-nailed boots and when the ditch was finished the rug under the dining table was in shreds. They enjoyed the nice meals Emma cooked for them and were flattering with their remarks. Will urged them to eat more. If a pig was killed they finished it in a week, or if we "vealed a calf" that went too. They likewise had sweets and almost finished the fruit I had canned before the children came. At last the tile was laid, and Will crawled through the tunnel in order to be sure it was all tight.

The ground about the house was bare of grass and when the wind blew in summer it was very dusty. We had to wash our quilts every summer and our fine oriental rugs wore out with beating. I begged for grass and he set Carl to plowing and smoothing the ground for it. We borrowed a big roller from Mr. Emmet Beeson and in a couple days work we planted grass seed. It was lovely to have nice clean grass about the place. Carl was mad and swearing all the time as he considered it unnecessary work and the horses ought not to be used for it. To this day it is one of the nice things we did. The Garden Club even came there for their meetings and the house kept clean. When we got water we kept it watered and the spindly trees where guests tied their horses grew into fine shade trees.

The tiny little pear trees put on growth and as there was plenty of room Will eagerly pored over the Nursery Stock-books and added several kinds of apples, apricots, plums, nectarines, figs, persimmons, etc. It would be five or more years before we could hope to get fruit from the pear trees. We had made a good many acquaintances in the village and Medford. A great many of them were from Minnesota and the Middle West and on the first 4th of July they came up to our shady grove for a picnic, some 60 of them. They came after that every year while we were there.

Mr. Fuller who was from Maine (probably of Mayflower stock) had barber's itch all over his face so we didn't patronize the local

## PIONEERING IN OREGON

barber after that. Will got a pail of barber's scissors and I cut the family hair, including Will's.

I was asked about then to make another set of Christmas cards for Dutton's of New, York, but had no time. Mr. John Macrae wrote me that perhaps marriage was better than drawing. He was a nice man. I did make some drawings for Al, however, so had a little money of my own to spend. While making these drawings I discovered that my eyes were changing and that I would need glasses.

We added five acres to our acreage by buying some land adjoining ours from Mr. Dean and we planted it to cherries.

Work was not easy as we had few conveniences, no electricity, no hot water tank, no running water at the house. All drinking and other water had to be pumped from the well in front of the house and carried back to the kitchen. This well had been behind the old Purves house, but was in front of ours. It had quite a history. While Mr. Purves was helping Will they decided to deepen the well. They dug as far as they could but they reached rock and decided to use dynamite. Instead of waiting for the gas to escape, Will went down into the well again and was almost overcome by the gas. Fortunately he was able to hang onto the rope and Purves pulled him out, where he lay on the ground quite a while before he recovered. It was quite deep when they finished, and good water.

Will was doing all kinds of hard work and had to use his fine hands. One of the first times alfalfa was put into the hay loft his hand was caught in the hayfork and badly lacerated. He bears the scar still. Some time later he thrust his hand into the centrifugal pump and lost the end of a little finger.

He had given Carl a shotgun when we first came out and Carl kept it in the corner of their kitchen, telling the family it was always loaded.

He grabbed it once to shoot at a rabbit and it went off and shot a hole through his old Army hat within an inch of his forehead. He was pretty pale when he came over to tell Doctor about it.

One day Will was coming to the house with his gun and Carl coming by exclaimed, "Let's see how the safety works," and grabbed it out of his hand. It went off and fired a shot thru the top of the wood house. An instant later Emma's head appeared at the same spot. She had been getting wood. Mrs. Mellin washed Carl's Army hat shortly after that, much to his disgust, as it never fitted as well again. Carl was quite temperamental. If he was given several tablets of medicine he would

take it all at one time. Once then he had a sore throat Will gave him some iodine to paint his throat and Carl used it so lavishly that the skin was so burned it peeled off. The little village supplied all our wants. There was a nice general store owned by Vandersluis and Brown. They carried our credit and were very patient about payments. Mr. Vandersluis was Dutch, his wife Scotch; both the kindest people in the world. They had a daughter Alice. Her



*Dr. Willaim Bagley and 2 of his children. Circa 1914*

mother told me that she had weighed but 2 pounds then she was born, and had been fed with a glass dropper. Mr. Vandersluis was a very large man and the last time I saw Alice she was a good size, too. Mr. Brown was a quiet, neat man and Mrs. Brown was very good to us always, a wonderful cook. When we got off the train once with several of the children, she came from her house near the station and said, "Come right in and have lunch with us, I have a roast in the oven enough for all of you."

Mrs. Brown's name had been Bonham, and the French had been visible in her. Her parents came to Talent for a visit one time. I asked them to dinner. I had fried chicken and when I was taking it up the platter slipped out of my hands and crashed on top of the stove. What to do? I gathered it up and we ate it. No one asked what had made all the noise.

Mrs. Brown took me for a drive one day and when we were about ten miles away I remembered I had left something cooking on the stove. We came back to find that Carl had come by and turned it off.

Our first Christmas was a trying time to me. I loved Christmas and all the festivities that went with it, but what to do about it there? No money for presents, nothing extra to eat. I got some rubber balls and crocheted some fancy colored covers for them and made extra cookies. I took Margaret's old doll, legless, armless, and dirty, made a new, body for it, arms, legs, and a new dress and made some yarn hair for it. Of course I had to hide it till Christmas. Margaret went about that week wailing

and crying, "I can't find my dolly," and when she got it Christmas morning she clasped it to her with tears of joy. As the children were examining their stockings Nordin came in with a pack on his back filled with things for all of us; a great silver serving spoon for Will and me, and things for every one. The Mellins came for Christmas dinner. I remember we had a pork roast, which was not much of a novelty, and a plum pudding. Carl made us a bow, and said, "I hope we have as good a dinner every year." We had mistletoe which grew on the oak trees for decoration and some of the Oregon grape holly.

The oak trees were infested with mistletoe. It was hard on the trees as it excreted the sap which was needed for the leaves and trees withered that had it. Everett Beeson sent us a man who cleaned it from the trees once but it had to be done often. I remember that William saved one beautiful oak tree by cutting it all out one year when he came down from school.

The children learned to drive the old gentle horses early and could go back and forth to the village. Helen learned first. I had warned her not to give anyone more than half the road as it was narrow with ditches on either side. One day Mr. Goddard said to me, "That was a great joke Helen played on me." "What was that?" I asked. "Oh, she took up the road so far it broke one of my wheels." I told him what I had told her and he laughed. He was a carpenter and mended his own wheel. Elizabeth drove, too, and was so little that you could barely see her head above the back of the seat.

I think it was Helen coming home with a load of shingles one day and they fell off and Mr. Gleim put them back on and tied them with a fine horse hair lariat. He had lived in Texas.

The first seed corn which we had brought with us yielded a bountiful crop with tall stalks and long ears. The people there had never seen such corn. Old Hensley insisted that the seed made no difference, that it was the soil and fertilizing which made a good crop. Men came from everywhere to ask for some for seeding and Will let them go to the bin and select for themselves. We had brought some fine white chickens and someone stole the beautiful big rooster. Will was very much upset and walked all over the surrounding country looking for it, saying he would know the crow anywhere, but we never found it.

*(To be continued in the March issue of The Historacle.)*





Talent Historical Society  
P.O Box 582  
Talent, OR 97540

## T.E.A.M. Meetings Tuesday Evening at the Museum

Tuesday Evening at the Museum continues with a wide variety of topics to entertain and inform us while we meet together every 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. All meetings are free for THS members and the general public to enjoy.

**December 10 - (Changed from December 3rd)** Annual Membership Meeting at 6:00 p.m. It will feature some holiday related cheer along with the annual report from the board to the general membership who wish to attend, with a special appearance by a holiday favorite! Board members added since the last annual meeting will be confirmed by vote by the membership in attendance. **Save the date!**



### Planned TEAM meeting dates for 2024:

<b>January 23</b>	<b>February 27</b>	<b>March 26</b>	<b>April 23</b>
<b>May 28</b>	<b>June 25</b>	<b>July 23</b>	<b>August 27</b>
<b>September 24</b>	<b>October 22</b>	<b>November 26</b>	<b>December 3</b>

As with every year, this schedule depends on the availability of speakers and may be updated throughout the year. Look for updates in future newsletters and in emails sent to members.