

The Historacle

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The Official Newsletter of the Talent Historical Society



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A. A. Skinner's Indian agency marked on an 1854 map

Note: This lead story is a continuation of the Reminiscences of Orson Avery Stearns. He came to the Wagner Creek area in 1853 as a ten year old boy. This section is from Chapter 3 of his Reminiscences and was written when he was in his 80's during the 1920s.

At the time of the beginning of the growth of the hamlet (as it might be termed) of Gassburg, say about the period of 1855 to 1860, the settlement of the region from Ashland down to what is now Central Point was almost exclusively confined to donation claimants, mainly bachelors, usually in pairs, with occasionally a family. Most of these donation claims were taken in 1853. A few, including the claims of Samuel and Hiram

Colver, were taken up in 1851 to '52. The Myers brothers located adjoining claims on [the] east side of Bear Creek in '53; adjoining them on the north were the Rhinehart brothers, bachelors David and Ezra, who were joined several years later by another brother. On the Myers' south was a family by the name of Fisk, who later sold out and went to northern California. Below Fisks', on Bear Creek, was the two half-sections of Woolen & White, also bachelors. On the north of Woolen's was the two partnership claims of Peter Smith & _____ Thrash (afterwards bought by the Patterson family), then between these claims and Bear Creek was the Wills claim, occupied for many years by William (Bill) Smith, who jumped the claim of Wills when the latter was shot by the Indians in 1853, and whose brother contested for and finally obtained title thereto. Then there was the claim of D. P. Britton, who was a young bachelor, for two or three years, but who finally went to the Willamette Valley and ran away with another man's wife down there, and lived thereafter on his farm and raised, together with a family already started, quite a family whose descendants, many of them (all girls), still reside in the valley. Next was the claim of Henry Ammerman, of one-half section, taken prior to 1853, extending from Bear Creek eastward nearly to the mountain, where a canyon of considerable extent ran up into the range, which was early occupied by a Norwegian family by name of Canuteson. North of Ammerman the two Oatman brothers took a half section each, as they were both men with families. Harrison B. and Harvey were their names, but they did not remain on their farms many years, as farming was too strenuous work for them, and they early moved to Gassburg, where Harrison started the second store there and Harvey built a hotel which he ran in connection with a saloon and billiard hall. A stable across the road was for many years the stage barn for the Oregon and Cal. Stage Company, and Oatman was host for the traveling public.

Continuing the enumeration of early settlers, down the valley N.W. from the Oatman claims which adjoined the Sam Colver place on the north was a family by name of Quigley, whose place adjoined the high cliff of rocks to the east, and gave to the cliffs the name of Quigley Rocks for many years. Then came Wm. Mathes, the Rev. John Grey, the Scott family and a son-in-law whose name I do not now recall. The Pinkham brothers, Ed & Joe; the latter married Grey's eldest daughter, Mary (I think her name was). All these later named people were located in a sort of group north of the crossing of Bear Creek, the Grey and Scott children forming quite a percentage of the earlier schools.

Randle was the name of widow Scott's son-in-law. They lived over there many years, and Randal I believe died there. He was a victim of phys (phthisic, I think they used to spell it). It is now called asthma.

Having enumerated all the early settlers on the north of Bear Creek from the Myers place down as far as Wm. Mathes' place, I will now return up to the Woolen south line and give the names of as many on the south and west side of the creek as I can recall. The first was an old bachelor by name Dingman, who sold to O. Coolidge in 1861. Next (on the creek) [were] two bachelors, one whose name I have forgotten, the

other was one of the schoolteachers later in the old log school house; his name was Reddick. Then the claims of Wm., Albert and George Rockafellow, whose claims were in the south of [the] junction of Wagner and Bear creeks. Jacob Wagner came next, who was supposed to be a partner of J. M. McCall, as they held down a half section land, though bachelors, for a number of years, McCall later giving way to James Thornton, who built upon and proved up on the south quarter-section.

Up Wagner Creek in order named was John Beeson, John Robison, David Stearns, Lockwood Little and Granville Naylor, who built the first sawmill thereabouts if not in the entire valley. All these last-named were located on Wagner Creek. To the west and extending to and embracing Anderson Creek were, first, James Downing on a creek flowing into Wagner Creek and named after the locator of the claim. Then the Anderson brothers E. K. (Joe) and Firman, whose half-section extended from the John Beeson farm westward to the foothills. I will here state these lands were unsurveyed until 1865, and there was some confusion resulted in arranging the claims as originally taken to conform to the subsequent surveys. Owing to this confusion many claimants managed to smuggle in quite a lot of unclaimed lands and hold them until children of theirs came of age, when they took up the lands so smuggled and acquiring title thereto retained the same in the family.

Adjoining the Anderson claim on the north and west was the claim of Woodford Reams, whose claim also touched the west line of Hiram Colver on the west. Then the claims of the Coleman brothers, Dad Little &c. Returning to Bear Creek and south of Hiram Colver's claim was the claim of two more bachelors, Nelson Smith and another bachelor who did not remain there and whose name I have forgotten. This is the place where the county poor farm is now located. It was purchased from the donation claimants by James Ammerman sometime about 1858 or 1859 and occupied by him until his death in the '70s I think, when his widow married Col. Stone, who had charge of the same until it was sold to the county, I believe.

Hiram Colver's house was just a little ways below on another note, later owned by a Mr. Harvey. There was just two houses between Wagner's and Gassburg up to 1855.

The grist mill was commissioned in 1854 by S. M. Waite before the outbreak of the Indian war of 1855, and I think the sawmill of Milton Lindley was built about the same time. All that portion of Samuel Colver's farm west of the main road was then open pine timber with a scattering of oak and laurel trees. It was nice large saw timber and close by the mill. A few years sufficed to cut down all the saw timber, and the once wide-open forest soon became a forest of young pine and other trees, with a mass of rotting treetops and limbs, the refuse of the wasteful method of logging where only the straight limbless bodies of the trees were used. I remember well that from 1858 to 1861, the young growth was only tall enough to partially conceal the mass of waste tree trunks and limbs left by the loggers, and [at] the very last term of school that I attended in the old school house that stood at or near the present church, there used to be a contest among the boys to see who could run and jump over the highest young pines.

About the time of the outbreak of the Indian war or just before, Sam Colver and John Davenport commenced to build the blockhouse. They intended it to serve as a hotel and a store for general merchandise when completed, as also to serve as a rendezvous for settlers during Indian troubles. It was sometime during the early autumn of 1855 that the Indians, having met quite serious defeat on Rogue River, had scattered out and were attacking outlying scattered settlements that notices were sent out for all scattered settlers to concentrate at best available points for protection, as nearly all able-bodied young men were in the various militia organizations pursuing the campaign against the Indians, leaving only men with families to hold the entire settlement against possible surprise and attack. Most all families within a radius of six miles gathered at the site of the blockhouse then under construction, making quite a village of tents and wagons. Many of the men engaged in the work on the blockhouse as Lindley's mill was busy sawing out the 4x4 timbers.

We remained there several weeks, with many coming and going. As Mr. Waite had quite a force of men working on his mill, the sawmill was being run night and day to furnish material for both mill and blockhouse, and several new industries sprang up, so there was quite a population.

In the evenings, after the day's work was over, there was usually a huge campfire burning in a central location, and all the young people and many of the old used to gather around the fire, sing songs, dance and tell stories until bedtime. Among all this concourse, while there were quite a number of young men and bachelors, there was only one young marriageable woman. Her name was Kate Clayton, who was employed by Mrs. Waite to help her cook for the men employed on the mill. She was a girl about twenty and one of the most fluent talkers I ever met. As every young girl fourteen years of age was then considered a young lady and usually had a dozen or more admirers, Miss Kate, from her position as almost sole attraction of that assembly, always had every available male congregated in her immediate neighborhood. From her ability to carry on an animated conversation to a half-dozen or more admirers at once, as well as her prompt and witty repartee, she had been given the sobriquet "Gassy Kate," the term "gass" or "gassy" being recent slang for talk or talkative, or, as the dictionary would define it, "light, frivolous conversation."

One evening soon after our arrival in camp, the usual campfire company was gathered around the fire, Kate as usual in the position of presiding goddess, while gathered around her in rapt admiration were her usual numerous admirers, among them Hobart Taylor, Dave Geiger, Jimmie Hays, ____ Black (given name forgotten), who had a very decided lisp. One of the men, during a lull in the talk, casting his eyes around the multitude of gathering tents, remarked, "I say! This is getting to be quite a town; we ought to give it a name." "I think tho too," said Black, "and I move we call it Gathville after Gathy Kate!" "Oh no!" said Hobart Taylor, "that sounds too small and insignificant. I move we call it Gassburg. That sounds more important." "Second the motion for Gassburg" came from a dozen or more at once. And Gassburg it became from thence

forward, for over twenty years.

Soon after the Indian war was over, in 1855 or '56, when a mail route was established between Portland and Sacramento a post office was established in a small office across the road from the grist mill, with S. M. Waite postmaster, and he took his fire insurance plate "Phoenix" as the name for the post office, but that did not serve as the name of the town for over a generation or more, and I have a very distinct recollection of all the above from actual personal knowledge.

The village received no permanent increase as the result of the Indian scare, but soon after the war was over the discovery of gold in the '49 and Davenport diggings gave it a start.

Recent Contributions to the Museum Collection

The permanent collection of historical artifacts has recently been enhanced by the following items:

Pony Express Saddle Bag and Scrapbook of Activities of the Sage Riders saddle club. Bag was used during the 1959 Oregon Centennial pony express runs from the Siskyou Summit to Portland. Donated by Cathy and Chet Rensker of Blaine, Washington.

A 1957 Talent High School Yearbook from Society member Bob Burnett.

Native American stone bowl on loan from member Georgelyn Van Note.

Slide rules and slide rule manuals donated by Robert Casebeer and Katherine Harris. Slide rules have almost totally been replaced by computers so these have indeed become historical.

Old-fashioned washboard (circa 1930s) from Robert Casebeer.

Talent-Phoenix Campfire Girls activity records from 1974 to 1979. from Audrey Casebeer.

Additions to the Educational Collection

Our educational collection has been created specifically to loan to local elementary and secondary teachers in the Phoenix Talent School District to bolster items presented to their students in the regular school curriculum. The most recent item is described below:

Five display notebooks of **newspaper clippings regarding the Mount Saint**

Helens 18 May 1987 volcanic explosion. These five items and the trifold display folders include pictures of the explosion and its aftermath, as well as pictures and discussion of all the major volcanoes in the Cascade Range.

Remember S & H Green Stamps?

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For readers who are under 30 years of age, the headline on this article will sound like gibberish. What is an S & H Green stamp? That is the question they will ask for the trading stamps dropped out of site in the 1980s.

S&H Green Stamps (also called **Green Shield Stamps**) were trading stamps popular in the United States from the 1930s until the late 1980s. They were distributed as part of a rewards program operated by the **Sperry and Hutchinson** company (S&H), founded in 1896 by Thomas Sperry and Shelly Hutchinson. During the 1960s, the rewards catalog printed by the company was the largest publication in the United States and the company issued three times as many stamps as the U. S. Postal Service. Customers would receive stamps at the checkout counter of supermarkets, department stores, and gasoline stations among other retailers, which could be redeemed for products in the catalog. S&H Green Stamps had several competitors, including Triple S Stamps (offered by Grand Union Supermarkets, Gold Bond Stamps, Blue Chip Stamps and Plaid Stamps (a project of A&P Supermarkets)

This is what an S & H Green Stamp looked like:



The stamps—issued in denominations of one, ten, and fifty "points"—were perforated with a gummed reverse, and as shoppers accumulated the stamps they moistened the reverse and mounted them in collectors books, which were provided free by S&H. The books contained 24 pages and to fill a page required 50 "points", so each book contained 1200 "points". Shoppers could then exchange filled books for premiums, including housewares and other items, from the local Green Stamps store or catalog. Each premium was assigned a value expressed by the number of filled stamp books required to obtain that item. The program had its greatest popularity during the mid 1960s, but a series of recessions during the 1970s decreased sales of green stamps and the stamp programs of their competitors. The value of the rewards declined substantially in the same time frame, requiring either far more stamps to get a worthwhile item or spending money for an item that was barely discounted from the price at regular stores, creating a general downward spiral as fewer and fewer people saw them as worth the trouble.

Sperry and Hutchinson was sold by the founders' successors in 1981, and was purchased from a holding firm by a member of the founding Sperry family in 1999. At that time, only about 100 U.S. stores were offering Green Stamps. Eventually, the company modified its practices with the advent of the Internet and now offers "greenpoints" as rewards for online purchases.

Enough of history for now! Lots of older folk, who saved Green Stamps did not get them converted when the sponsoring company declined into near oblivion. They were left holding what they thought were totally useless pieces of sticky paper. However, Green Stamps are not worthless. People who have green stamps can still redeem them **at face value**. However, you must enroll in what is called the Green Points program... which is still operated by the Hutchinson family. Only one major catch. All their operation is done on line...so a computer hooked to the Internet is essential at first. Use this website address: www.greenpoints.com .

To trade in Green Stamps for Greenpoints holders of Green Stamps must enroll in the Greenpoints program. Detailed instructions are given at the **Help Center** at the web site just cited. Once enrolled individuals holding Green Stamps are asked to send the stamps to the Greenpoints program following their specific instructions. There is no longer a print catalog of redemption items, but at the website just cited, there is a Redeem Your Reward section which provides similar information about what one can receive for old Green Stamps or the new Greenpoints.

Don't throw those old Green Stamps away in the trash...convert them! What you will get are gift cards from scores of major national companies. It takes a lot of Greenpoints to get these gift cards which range from Shell and British Petroleum \$10 cards for 13,000 greenpoints... but if you purchase items online, scores of companies, provide greenpoints with each purchase. Check it out. See the "Earn Greenpoints Online" section at the website www.greenpoints.com .

Early History of the Talent Schools 1853-1973

Note: This history was written by Elton Petri around May 15, 1973

It is said "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge". The fear of the Indians contributed its share in the beginning of knowledge in the Rogue River Valley, particularly in the Talent area. It was while the settlers were "forted up" at Fort Wagner that the need for a school was discussed, and action taken to establish one. Fort Wagner was located on the west bank of Wagner Creek and south of Old Pacific Highway, (Talent Ave) on what was later known as Evergreen Gardens or the W.H. Breese place. (It is now occupied by mobile homes.)

The office of the E. S..D. in Medford has nearly three pages of data contributed by Anna Beeson Carter, daughter of Welburn Beeson; from whose diary much information has been derived and from which we will quote from time to time. It would seem from this data, that the first school in the area was taught in the upper story of the Samuel

Culver house in Phoenix (Pike or Pike Town) in the winter of 1853. It is stated that this was not so, as the house had not been built at that time. An entry in the Welburn Beeson Diary for Christmas Day 1856 has this statement: "Culver has his large house built up two story high, but it is not covered yet." This statement would seem to preclude any possibility of there being any school at that location in the winter of 1853

Quoting from the Beeson Diary, December 15, 1853: "In the evening of this date Father and I went to a school meeting at the Fort. At this meeting it was decided to build a schoolhouse near a spring on the Smith and Chase Donation Land Claims. The Rev. Fletcher Royal is to go around with subscription papers tomorrow." From the Beeson Diary on May 15, 1854: "I went to help raise the schoolhouse. Father (John Beeson) hauled a load of lumber for it. There were 13 men to help raise. We got it raised. I think it will be ready for meeting soon." Information from the diary of Orson Stearns is said to state that the schoolhouse was constructed of pine logs, 16' x 32.

Among the first pupils, were children from the Anderson and Reams families as well as Welburn Beeson. The books were those brought by the settlers across the plains or around the Horn. The first teacher was Mary Hoffman. The Andersons, from which Anderson Creek derives its name, lived west of Talent: the Reams property adjoined the west side of the Anderson property. The Beeson claim was south of Talent and included such places as the Holdridge, Carter, Foss and Gleim properties. An entry on May 16, 1856 in the Beeson Dairy may be a clue to other pupils who attended: "I went to hunt for a cow that got out of the pasture last night, but I could not find her. I stopped at the school ... (afternoon) I went in swimming with Calvin Wagner, Joe and Sam Robison, Thomas Reams and Orson Stearns in Bear Creek. The water is rather cold. It has been a very warm day."

After the school was organized, it was to be known as the Vernon school; and in the Beeson Dairy, it is frequently referred to as the Mt. Vernon School. As to its exact location, we can not be sure. From all information, both written and hearsay, it would seem it stood on the West bank of Bear Creek; a short distance downstream from where the present road crosses Bear Creek at Suncrest and Fern Valley. Judging from a copy of an old map, it would seem to have been in Sec. 23 of Township #38 S., Range #1 West of Willamette Meridian. There was also a cemetery quite near the school as the Beeson Dairy frequently refers to burials taking place there. One instance was of a man by the name of Fields, who was killed by Indians on the Siskiyou (at the place where the present road leaves the highway to the ski resort on Mt. Ashland) His body was brought to the school before being removed to the cemetery.

There seems to be no definite date available as to when the Vernon or Mt. Vernon School met for the first time. It is known that the settlers were interested in more than just education in the three "R"s for their children. Long before the schoolhouse was completed, they were planning the religious training of their children as well. From the Beeson Dairy, we have these entries: May 21, 1854, "On this date the first Sunday

School was organized. Father went to a meeting at Mr Rockefeller's, Rev. Fletcher Royal preached. He organized a Sunday School. If the new schoolhouse is finished, it will commence Sunday." June 11, 1854; "Sunday, Father and I attended Sunday School at the new schoolhouse. Mr. Rockefeller was elected superintendent. There were quite a number for the first Sunday School in the Rogue River Valley." Thus the fourth "R" entered into the life of the community.

After the schoolhouse was completed, it was used for many purposes. Among the unusual, was the Singing School that met there. Something, which people of this day and age, hear little of. From the Beeson Dairy of June 25, 1854; "Quarterly meeting today and tomorrow, 25th & 26th of June, 1854. A great many present. The house was full and many outside. Mr Wilbur preached assisted by Mr Hoxie and Mr Taylor." (The first quarterly meeting in Jacksonville was held September 24, 1854, in the new church in Jacksonville) Another meeting held in the building that was not a credit to the community, was one at which the above mentioned (Rev.) Mr. Taylor presided. This meeting was referred to as a "Protest Meeting" by Welburn Beeson. At this meeting, action was taken that caused Welburn's father to slip away in the dead of night. He went to Fort Lane and was given a military escort out of the valley. The meeting "protested" the speaking and writing by John Beeson, defending the Indian cause. Rather ironic, that a man who was so influential in having the building erected should find himself the victim of action taken therein.

There seems to be no record as to how long the Vernon School existed as such. It is known that about 1856 a school was built on Wagner Creek. It was no doubt the one which was sometimes referred to as the George Lynch School and sometimes as the South School. A school was later built approximately in the N.E. corner of the Everett Beeson field on Wagner Creek Road. It was sometimes referred to as the North Wagner Creek School. In later years when the school ceased to be, the building was removed to the Talent Orchard Co. west of Talent. The South School which was District #56 remained until it consolidated with the Phoenix District in July of 1951. A third school was built in the central part of Talent and now used as the City Hall. Students from this school wishing to complete high school had to go elsewhere, usually to Ashland to complete their training. Following the construction of the present brick building in 1911, a four-year high school was instituted. The Anderson Creek School District #72 was split off the Talent School District in 1892. It was first situated about a mile and a half up Anderson Creek from the first fork in the road. At that time a sawmill stood on a flat between the present road and the creek. One of the mill shacks was renovated for the schoolhouse. Its first teacher was Grant Rawlings, who later-became County Recorder, the first ever elected on a Populist ticket. The Populist Party was a political group which was somewhat meteoric in life, in that it flourished quite effectively for a few years and then died out completely. (At this same time Welburn Beeson Jr. became Deputy Assessor as he was an effective worker for the Populist Party.)

THINGS TO DO. PLACES TO GO.

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MAY 12th Saturday: Citywide Garage Sale. Our sale will be inside & outside from 8-5 pm, selling non-museum collectibles and miscellaneum. We will gladly pick-up any items you would like to donate for this fundraiser. We are a 501C3 non-profit organization, so you can get a tax write-off for any articles you donate. Call 541-535-4700 for pickup.

MAY 19th Saturday: Cleanup, anytime 8am-4pm, at Stearns Cemetery on Anderson Creek Road, sponsored by the Cemetery Association. There will be a potluck at noon: drinks, baked ham and plates/utensils are provided. Following the meal is the annual meeting. Come whatever time works for you. There are canopies put up, and tables-- please bring a lawn/camp chair to assure seating. Bring tools if you can - shovels, rakes, weed eaters, trowels, clippers etc. Be sure your items are well marked with your name. Plastic flowers/coffee-can type holders are OK, but no glassware. People will also come on Sunday, but there is no schedule. More info, 541-512-9483.

JUNE 10th Sunday: Honoring the life and contributions of Charlotte & Lyn Newbry at the Community Center 3-5 pm.

JULY 22nd Sunday: Community Potluck and Barbeque on Wagner Creek, location to be announced. **ON-GOING DISPLAY:** Mt. St. Helens newspaper articles & fotos of the eruption on May 18, 1980. at the Talent Historical Sociey Museum Our phone number is 541-512-8838, hours are Wed-Sat 1-5 pm.

TALENT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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