

The Historacle Special Edition February 26, 2012

The Official Newsletter of the Talent Historical Society



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The Eden School: Talent's First School Was Near Bear Creek

Note: In 1921, eighty year old Orson Avery Stearns, wrote a series of articles he titled "Reminiscences of Pioneer Days and Early Settlers of Phoenix and Vicinity." His "Chapter Two" presents his recollections of the first school in Jackson County, which was located in Talent. He was a student and was in the first class in 1854.

The first school house was built by the settlers living near what is now Talent. It was of rough logs, with cloth-covered windows on two sides. Its floor was of slabs, benches of slabs, with legs of round sticks inserted in auger holes, no backs. The desks were simply rough plank tables. It was erected on the bank of Bear Creek about one-fourth of a mile from the farm of Jacob Wagner (now Talent). There being no school districts yet established, it was started as a subscription school and the name of Eden given to the school.

The first teacher was Miss Mary Hoffman, and her school consisted of the children of the surrounding country for several miles in every direction, many of the pupils being older than the teacher. The schoolbooks consisted of books brought across the plains from near a dozen different states, and were as varied as were the pupils. Scarcely any two families had the same series of schoolbooks, and the organizing of classes was a very difficult matter. Reading, writing and arithmetic were about all the branches taught.

Believe I can give a pretty correct roll of the scholars, who ranged in age from seven to twenty-three years of age. They were Welborn Beeson; Joseph, Samuel, John and Robert Robison; Oscar, Orson and Newell Stearns; Theresa Stearns; Thomas, Martha and James Reams; Martha, Abi, Donna, Hiram and Solon Colver; Elizabeth and Nancy Anderson; Calvin Wagner; Mary, Nancy and Joseph Scott; Mary, Robert, Daniel, John and William Grey; Lewellyn Colver, and I am not sure but there were two or three others. Lew Colver was then about seven years old and rode to school on a little white pony.

The teacher was a very good disciplinarian and, though very pleasant and sociable outside school hours, was quite strict in enforcement of discipline, almost entirely by moral suasion. At intermissions she joked and laughed with the other girls as though one of them. I remember one instance where she had received a love letter written entirely in [Chinook] jargon, which she and the other girls were immensely tickled over, but which she was very careful not to let the other girls see the signature to.

There were during the next few years four other terms of three months each taught

in the log school house, though the attendance was never as large, nearly all the older pupils dropping out.

The Rev. John Grey was the next teacher, and a more thoroughly disliked pedagogue it never was my misfortune to attend. He always rode to school on an old bay mare, with his children, five in number, trailing along behind or driven in front of him. On reaching the school house he would dismount, unsaddle and, giving his steed into the charge of one of his boys with instructions to take her down near the creek and stake her out where was good grass, would take his saddle and sheepskin blanket and spread on his stool, and there he would remain nearly the entire day, making all pupils and classes come up to his throne to recite their lessons; and woe to the laggard in recitation or who failed in any way to please him, for he generally kept a heavy ruler by his side, which he frequently used.

He was particularly severe with his son John, who was a twin of William. John was in looks the image of his father, being dark and with very black hair and eyes, with a furtive look like a hunted animal. He could never recite his lessons through fear of his father, who would scowl at him fiercely when he came up to recite and upon the slightest mistake would hit him on the side of his head with the book he happened to have in hand, knocking him to one side, then hitting him on the other side and frequently continuing the performance until tired out. No wonder John Grey grew up to be a profligate and ne'er-do-well. He died in the Klamath poor farm several years ago.

Henry Church was the third teacher in Eden school house. He was a tuberculous person and of a variable disposition. Quite capable, but his unfortunate disposition prevented him from having that esteem and confidence of his pupils that is necessary for success in teaching.

A Mr. Reddick was the fourth teacher. He was a bachelor who had located a homestead just southeast of the Rockafellow place on Bear Creek. He did not amount to much as a teacher.

A Mr. McCauley was the fifth and last teacher who held the position of tutor to the Edenites. He was a fairly good man and tolerably fair teacher who simply took up the vocation to fill a jobless space in life, and with no special desire to excel in the profession.

The school house in Gassburg was built sometime in the late 'fifties. It stood about the same place now occupied by the Phoenix church. It was [a] lumber building, box and batten construction, I think, with fairly good homemade furniture. It was about 18x32 feet in dimensions and faced the east. It was lighted by three or four windows on north and south sides. The first school taught there, to the best of my recollection, was by Orange Jacobs, and he taught several successive terms.

Many of the pupils who attended the Eden school attended the Gassburg school, besides many others living farther down the valley. Charles Hoxie; Al, Rose, Nettie Gore; Sarah Jane Arundell and a younger sister whose name I cannot recall [possibly Mary Jane]; William Burns; Wm. and Lucinda Williams; Doc & William Griffin; John,

James, Nancy & (another younger sister) Justus; George & Alec Gridley; Lucinda and Ben Davenport; Lucinda Low; Wm. Belle; and a younger sister of the Hamlins. Several others whose names I cannot now recall were among Jacobs' pupils at one or more terms. I believe James Neil also attended one or more terms of his school. Lucinda Davenport married Jacobs at the end of his first term.

One incident that might have had a tragical ending occurred during the second term. The Griffin and Justus pupils lived on the west several miles and frequently came and went away from school together. One morning upon reaching the school house a little before school time we were astonished to see the elder Justus pacing before the school house with a cocked revolver in his hand while Doc Griffin and a number of the other pupils from the same neighborhood stood by listening to the old man's tirade against Griffin, in which he repeatedly threatened to blow Griffin's head off for kissing or attempting to kiss Nancy Justus while on the way home from school the previous day.

O. Jacobs soon arrived and prevailed upon the old man to defer his warlike intentions to some other time and place. Never heard of any sequel to the affair, though many of the boys agreed that any fellow who would kiss Nancy Justus deserved to be shot, for she was as homely and ungainly a creature as I ever saw, and as ugly in disposition as in looks. She afterwards married the two Ball brothers; not at the same time, but in rather rapid succession, both of them dying very suddenly and mysteriously after a short matrimonial experience.

After Jacobs quit teaching and went to practicing law, a Professor John Rogers opened up school in the Colver Hall. He was a graduate and professor in Yale College, who left the East at the discovery of gold and had been drifting over the Coast for a number of years, and I presume had about reached the bottom of his purse.

His school was an immediate success, his method of teaching new and unique. He seemed to have a mastery of every science and had [a] method of his own to classify and teach them. He encouraged studying out loud in school and elsewhere, claiming that pupils who were as absorbed in their studies as they should be would not be disturbed by the recitals of others. He encouraged mass rehearsals and had all the little scholars talking and quoting Latin phrases. Whenever there were visitors--and there were many--he would ask some of his younger scholars the Latin names of various animals and other objects and would smile and rub his hands gleefully upon their giving the correct answers in chorus. Your mother, my sister and one or two other girls were his prize repeaters, and he had them drilled to perfection as performers. He encouraged his pupils to take up many advanced studies for which they had no preparatory knowledge, and he frequently changed from one study to another so that his pupils had a smattering knowledge of many subjects rather than a thorough knowledge of a few.

He was very punctilious and polite, and drilled his pupils in politeness. He even encouraged school parties on occasions when there was no school and gave them lessons in deportment, but always insisted on ending all parties as early as 12 M[idnight].

He was quite religious, opening school with prayer when he insisted on bowed

heads and closed eyes, his own being always open and watching vigilantly for any infraction of the rules by his pupils. His devotional exercises were taken standing, and once in a while his voice would cease while his firm and rapid strides carried him to some part of the room when one would hear some noise as of a person being lifted up and violently reseated. When the steps returned, the invocation was resumed in the place left off without a perceptible change of voice and concluded in [the] usual manner.

At times he would be very nervous and hard to please, as though under a strain; at other times full of smiles and good nature. He taught one full year's term and part of another when his pupils had gradually dwindled and until he had so few that he dismissed school entirely. Soon after his school ended the cause of his nervousness and instability was discovered in the garret just above the platform where his desk stood, to which a small trapdoor gave him easy access. There were found several empty whiskey bottles. It was also learned that in his accustomed early morning rambles he was wont to visit the store of McManus, who always kept a barrel of whiskey on tap and who gave the professor his morning invigorator under the pledge of silence.

After the discovery of the bottles and the departure of the professor, McManus told a joke he had on the professor. He had emptied one barrel of his liquor and, removing it, had placed in its place a barrel of very strong vinegar. He was out in his woodshed to get a load of wood to fill up his stove one day, leaving the professor standing by his fire when, coming suddenly into the back door, he saw the professor in the act of emptying a full glass of the supposed whiskey down his throat. The choking and gagging that followed was terrible to see and hear but could not restrain Mc from a fit of laughter almost as paralyzing as the dose of vinegar to the professor. The latter it seems had been in the habit of helping himself to the liquor so temptingly displayed, and had heard Mc coming and hastily drew and swallowed the liquid for fear of being caught in the act, not knowing of the change in barrels. Mc said the prof. looked like a dog caught sucking eggs.

As my attendance at the first term of Rogers' school was my last term of schooling, the names of succeeding teachers in Gassburg are only partially known. I think a Mr. Burhans taught the next term there, and a Sylvester Price I think taught there one term.

I will add that while attending the Jacobs' school myself my brothers and several other boys kept bachelor's hall ["batched it"] in a cabin about one hundred and fifty yards east of the school house. And, for most of the time while attending the Roger's school, my mother kept house for us in a hewed-log house just west of the blockhouse, in which the Davenports formerly lived. Dr. Timothy Davenport, with his wife, spent several winters in there prior to 1864, and finally Aunt Sally and Ben went back to Silvertown to live.

**The Talent Historical Society Needs More Members Willing To
Serve on the Board of Directors—Interested? Call 541-512-8838**

Society Archives Contain Family Data

For this issue of the **Historacle** you will find below the names of the families listed M alphabetically to P about which the Archives have some data. Readers who may have documentary or photographic materials about the listed families are urged to share those materials with the Society. We would photocopy your items and return them to you, as we do not wish to separate you from family treasures. Here are the names: **(M)** Maddox, Mainwaring, Mansfield, Marin, Marottii, Marquess, Marshall, Mason, Maxwell, McAlbee, McColgan, McCord, McFaddin, McGrath, McKee, McLaughlin, McMahan, Mathes, Medina, Melick, Messenger/Cotton, Meyer, Michaelis, Michalson, Miller, Minchow, Minear, Mooney, Moore, Morefield, Momson, Morse, Mussack, Naumes, Naylor, Netherland, Newbry, Nininger, Niswonger, Nye, Oatman, Ohlund, Ortiz, and Owens.

2011 Activity Report of the Talent Historical Society

The Board of the Historical Society is well aware that many members of the Society may only have the newsletter as their main contact with the activities of the Society, and often have rarely visited the museum itself. So the Board has prepared this article to acquaint our membership with what the Society did during the year 2011.

Registrants: On the average, about 150 individuals sign the register at the museum each month. Not all folk who wander in actually sign the register. Our monthly visitors do not count the 35 to 40 folk a week who enter the museum on Thursdays when the Talent Food Bank is active, nor the volunteers who operate the Food Bank. During 2011 about 1700 individuals have signed our registration book. The number of people who visit has increased annually since the Society moved into the present building at 105 North Market Street.

Exhibits: Since December 2010, eight major exhibits and a number of smaller displays have graced the museum. These include:

Jewel Lockard's **House Models and Sketches** which were exhibited in December, 2011. Some 55 of her sketches of animals and places drew over 100 viewers to the museum at its opening in December at the Talent Art Walk. This was the first time a major display of her artistic creations had been presented to the Talent community. The models included the Anderson Butte Lookout and Zane Grey's cabin down the Rogue river, in addition to four other scale models of barns and buildings, most of which no longer exist.

A **Civil War exhibit** centered on military action in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia in August 1864, which featured a letter and diary extract from both Union and Confederate soldiers who were facing each other in the very same skirmishes. Centered on Winchester, Virginia, which had been invaded 70 times during the conflict, the exhibit drew considerable attention. Also on display at the same time, and still up, is a photocopy of the entire front page of the New York Herald published the day after Lincoln was shot dead.

A **Japanese rifle**, captured on Guam by a member of the Salas family, is still on display as it has been loaned to the museum for a long term exhibit.

The **Talent Centennial Quilt**, which was made by scores of Talent residents during the 2010 city centennial, has been given to the Society for permanent display by the City of Talent. Currently, the quilt is mounted in the Talent Public Library where visitors there can enjoy the creativity of some of the citizens of Talent.

A display board featuring **Ursula Robison Goddard Dean** was created by Talent resident Jamie Cope for her SOU class “Women in U. S. History,” and was given to the Society for display.

The **Brickpile Cabin Door**, embellished with the names of hunters, visitors, and local cattlemen (who burned their brands in the door) was given to the museum for permanent display by Charlotte Beeson Toon. The cabin itself was built in 1903 on the Little Applegate River and has had several owners. The Beeson family built the cabin which no longer exists, but its original door can be seen at the museum.

Some 200 **Historical Photographs of the Talent Area** have been placed on a CD and can be played as a slide show on the Society television set in the museum. The Society now has over 3500 photographs which record Talent area history. Readers who wish to enlarge our collection are reminded that the Society merely scans the original photos and makes sure that the originals are returned to the owner.

Holiday Displays are mounted as each major holiday nears. During 2011, such displays included: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Valentine's Day, Saint Patrick's Day, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. In December the Society published a special edition covering Winter Solstice celebrations world-wide.

Reference Library: Over the years, the Society has developed a small reference library for use by the public. The collection focuses primarily on Oregon and Southern Oregon history. Activity this past year dealt with creating an accurate card file, a shelf list, and sorting the books by topical category. Bob Wilson, former board member, and former Ashland Public Library librarian, suggested that most people who come into our museum are seeking specific topical information, and this pattern of storage would be the most successful.

Besides published books, we have a number of unique notebooks covering vital statistics about Jackson county, historical houses in Talent, local historical articles from a variety of original sources, and four obituary notebooks with an alphabetical index focusing on Talent area individuals who have passed away. Regarding vital statistics, these areas are available:

Jackson County marriages, city directories, divorces, births, jury lists, wills, probates, guardianships, and estate files—a treasure trove of data.

Because of the increased interest in gold prospecting, the library has provided more additional information about Southern Oregon mining, Jackson County mines, and area mining districts.

Donations to the Reference Library increased during 2011 and focused on historical books and magazines, including copies of the Oregon Historical Quarterly and a number of old publications of the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

The Permanent Collection: The Societies collection of actual artifacts include those exhibits in the main room of the museum building, although other artifacts, documents, and photographs are stored for preservation and future display purposes.

A separate **Educational Collection** has also been created for use by teachers of the Phoenix-Talent School District. The most recent addition to this collection has been photographs and five notebooks of newspaper clippings about the May 18, 1980, eruption of Mount Saint Helens.

Photographs: During 2011 some 500 photographs were added to the approximately 3500 previously collected. Currently, these are stored on the office computer, but an external hard drive has just been purchased which will be used to store our photographs more safely. Those who have purchased a copy of our former museum director and Talent historian Jan Wright's Talent book have seen a small portion of our photographic collection. The Reference Library also has several separate photographic albums. Editions of thirteen Talent High School annuals are also available in the Talent Area archives.

Newspaper Archives: The Society has in its various collections a number of newspapers beginning with the Talent News published from 1892 to 1894 by the youthful Edward Robison who was 18 when the first edition was printed.

All of the extant copies of the Talent News Flash, edited by Talent resident Mae Lowe, assisted by Alice Burnette, were placed in our permanent collection by Alice Burnette. This mimeographed publication, which was published from 1934 to 1987 on a biweekly basis, has been boxed, filed by date, and all missing copies identified. Mae Lowe's grandson says he has a complete set of the rare publication, and has said that the Society can photocopy any missing copies.

Forty-seven copies of editor John Morrison's Phoenix-Talent Record which was published in 1995 are available at the museum. If anyone has issue #1 of the **Record** we would appreciate being able to copy it, as that issue is missing from our collection.

Family Archives: During 2011 the Family Archives, which include Upper Bear Creek family data, has been organized and enhanced by additional family data provided by area family members.

Historical Archives: Stored, like the Family Archives, these boxes of documents and newspaper clippings, cover historical situations and events primarily in the Upper Bear Creek Valley with a primary focus on Wagner, Bear Creek and the Talent area. Some collections of historical items from the greater Southern Oregon area can be found here as well.

Publications and Website: Besides author Jan Wright's Talent book which was released in 2010 during the City of Talent Centennial, the Society hosts a web page on the Internet. (Just google up "Talent Historical Society" and our website will pop right up

on your computer screen—there is only one Talent in the United States!) Back issues of the Society's quarterly newsletter The Historacle can be found on the website, a version of Jan Wright's **Jackson County Pioneer Database** can be accessed from the Society website and it has some 19,000 Jackson County pioneers listed. Far more data can be secured for avid family searches by contacting Jan herself, for our material is not as extensive as her evolving data base.

2011 Programs: The Society offered a number of programs this past year to the membership and the general public. They are listed next:

“**The Life of Willis J. Dean,**” a late nineteen hundred Talent educator, was given by Medford historian Ben Truwe, who also contributed Dean's original 191-1919 diaries to the Society's permanent collection.

“**The Vegetation Patterns of the Bear Creek Valley**” were described and documented with an historical slide show by Gene Hickman of Bend, using maps and photographs of what once was a rather extensive pine forest interspersed with prairie. Hickman did the study for the Bureau of Land Management

At the Annual Meeting of the Society, Jan Wright presented a program about the Jackson County Farm Home, titled “**Taking Care of Grandpa: The Jackson County Poor Farm.**”

Two separate programs with the same title “**Talent As It Was**” brought a number of long time Talent residents together, creating a mixed audience including folk who more recently call Talent their home. The first session was facilitated by Jan Wright, and the second by Pat Bentley. The museum was full for both presentations.

Staffing: To keep the museum open after the county commissioners cut off the tax funds which had been dedicated to the preservation of Jackson County history since 1948, board members have spent about 20 hours weekly, thus allowing the museum to be open from 1:00 to 5:00 p. m. Wednesdays through Saturdays. Through an arrangement with the federally funded Experience Works, which employs and trains workers over 55, the Society accepted three trainees this past year: Don Tarter, a Vietnam veteran; Mary Lou Flynn, a former secretary; and Van Tribble, a for community college instructor. At the present time, because our Society enjoys a non-profit, tax-free designation, it is eligible to accept and train these individuals. At the present, only Van Tribble is working here.

Finances: The Society enjoys the support of the City of Talent which owns the building where the museum is located at 105 North Market Street. The Society leases the building from the City for \$1200 a year, and pays for the utilities and heating/cooling costs. We share the building with the Talent Food Bank, whose Thursday afternoon operation uses a portion of the building to house its food storage, refrigerator and freezers. To cover these costs and the costs of operating the various functions of the Society (many of which are discussed in this particular article), the Society has an arrangement with Camelot Theatre whereby actors, dancers, and directors use out open floor space to prepare for forthcoming productions at the Theatre while a operation production is staged in the theater. This arrangement basically covers our lease costs

and some of our utility costs.

Other facets of the Society operations—many of which have been described in this article are being funded by donations, annual memberships, and in the past by several grants in aid from both local, and state organizations and foundations. The Society from July 2011 to January 2012 was supported by \$3,461 and for this budget year currently has \$6,990.53 in its checking and savings accounts. Other current assets total \$890.44; with fixed assets (furniture, office equipment, etc.) of \$4,823 (such assets gathered and secured since the Society was incorporated in 1994). The value of the Reference Library and the Archives have not been considered in this analysis.

Administrative Activity: This past year nearly all of the known **Society Records**--- minutes, documents, monthly operational reports to the Board, correspondence, etc. have been organized by date and placed in appropriate notebooks. These date from March 1993 to the present time.

The Board authorized a “**New Baby Program**” membership program this year. When a Talent area couple has a new baby, and currently are not members of the Society, a free year's membership is provided with genealogical material so the parents can record the child's heritage. However, due to various legal stipulations in the various enacted “privacy acts,” it is difficult to secure mailing addresses to make this effort as sturdy as the Society would like. Unless a couple has its phone number documented in a telephone directory (relying on a cell phone for example), a mailing address can not be located. Members who are aware of couples with newly born babies can assist us with the expansion of this program by providing an active mailing address of new parents.

Southern Oregon Historical Society secured a grant this past year which provides a way for members of the Jackson County Heritage Association to be given some **museum supplies** without charge. The Society has utilized this program and has secured storage boxes, archive boxes, had the museum checked for ultra-violet light (found one display case that was defective and removed the electric lighting system in that case), and had the building checked for humidity and other environmental problems—all this without any cost to the Society and its members. Certain **classes** regarding museum and storage of archives has also been provided by SOHS through their grant to the 13 small historical societies and museums like ourselves here in Jackson county.

Several items of historical value have been dispatched to other historical societies. Some business ledgers involving real estate transactions were given to the Deschutes County Historical Society because they involved business transactions that included the founding of a board of realtors in the early years of the past century when the Bend area was developing rapidly. Some old newspapers were sent to the public library in Buffalo, Wyoming, at their request for transmittal.

All of this has been accomplished during the past year with the support and help of a Society membership of 149. In October 1993, the Society membership was 90 of which 13 are presently members. In July, 2010, the membership totaled 148.

Community Wide
“Tribute to Alice Burnette”
February 26, 2012 3:00 to 5:00 p. m.
Community Center Building

Join Us in Honoring this Remarkable Lady of Talent
She is now 96 and has been a community leader
since 1934