



The Historacle

The Official Newsletter of the
Talent Historical Society

Volume 21 Issue 2

June 2015

Tokay Grape Festival Held in Grants Pass in 1912

by Robert L. Casebeer

On October 11, 1912, the first Tokay Grape Festival to grace Southern Oregon was held in Grants Pass. Today even being able to taste a Tokay Grape is difficult. So exactly what is a Tokay Grape and why is it hard to find now?

The Tokay Grapes are bright, light red table grapes. They are round, and have seeds, with a sweet taste and crisp texture. They were very popular up until the development of seedless grapes which mature several weeks earlier. However, Tokay (also known as Flame Tokay) remain sweeter. The grape is probably native to Algeria, and it was planted in Lodi, California, for the first time in 1847.

The reddish-yellow orbs were once a cash crop for Lodi, but now are nearly forgotten. It was widely popular in vineyards around Lodi in the early 1900s, but as consumers' tastes for seedless grapes grew, the Flame Tokay's demand fell rapidly. The crop is so obscure now that San Joaquin County's Agricultural Commissioner's office doesn't even track how many acres of the crop are grown.

Although the grapes can't be bought at any grocery store, they can occasionally be found at local curbside fruit stands near Lodi from August to December as a scattered collection of growers still tend to the vines of the nearly forgotten produce. "I'll never pull the vines out, not as long as I own the property," said Karen Chandler, of Cecchetti Olive Oil Inc. There are a few acres of the grapes near the olive grove, and they are sometimes sold by the property on Sargent Road, she said. "It's hard to let that go, no matter if we could put another crop in there and make a ton of money; it's not worth it." For decades, the Flame Tokay grape was critical to Lodi's agricultural

industry, said amateur Lodi historian Ralph Lea. The hot days and cool evening breezes were perfect for the grapes developing their deep flavors and rich colors, he said.

Having a similar climate, tons of Tokay Grapes were also grown in Josephine County, Oregon right after the turn of the century. That production was what sparked the business community in Grants Pass to start what they hoped would be an annual Tokay Grape Festival.

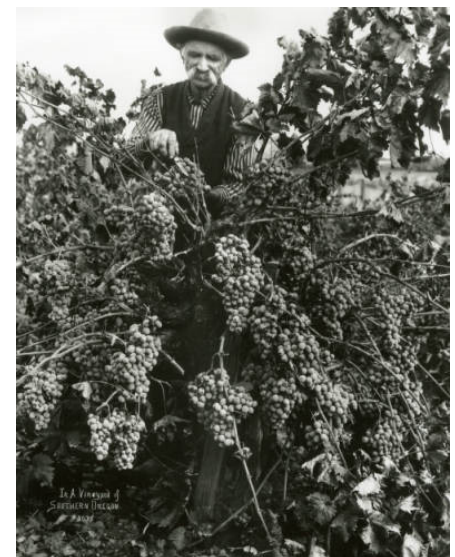
Much of the data about Tokay Grape production in Josephine County has been derived from a lawsuit appealed by the Oregon & California Railroad Company back in 1914. Basically, that railroad company was given every other section on each side of their railroad line by the federal government as an inducement to build the railroad itself. The federal grant required the railroad company to sell agricultural land to settlers as homesteads for \$2.50 cents an acre. But, the company was selling its sections to timber companies because each quarter section would produce saw logs of Douglas Fir scaling out at 1,500,000 board feet. That much timber was worth a lot more than \$2.50 cents an acre so the railroad was not interested in selling land to farmers, even though they were required to do so by the terms of the initial grant of land.

According to testimony during the appeal, data about Josephine County production of Tokay grapes was provided by various witnesses. Mr. I. B. Spiker's testimony indicated that the crops for 1913 would yield \$150,000 in grapes alone. He concluded his testimony by stating, "The cultivation of the grape, specifically the Tokay Grape, has proceeded to a point in

Josephine County where I am convinced, as a practical man, that it can be successfully conducted in this county, beyond a shadow of a doubt." Josephine County's fruit tree inspector pointed out that 50,000 fruit trees and 265,000 grape vines were set out in the Rogue River Valley during 1909—including 475 acres of grapes. Other testimony indicated that the red soil of the hills and benches (exactly the land that the railroad wanted to sell to the timber firms) was the best soil for apples and grapes, because the iron in the soil gave much better color to the fruit of both the apples and the grapes.

According to testimony, the commercial grape-growing in Josephine County attracted considerable attention between 1912 and 1914. This was demonstrated by grapes planted on the red hill slopes of Josephine County when a sixty acre vineyard near Grants Pass showed the "old settlers" that there was a source of wealth in the foothill

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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 operate a museum and meeting place located at:

105 North Market Street
Talent, Oregon

The museum is open Wednesday through Saturday from 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm

General Business Address:

P.O. Box 582
Talent, OR 97540

Phone Number: (541) 512-8838

Email: talenthistory@gmail.com

www.talenthistory.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/819998034709417/


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THS President's Message

There is nothing like contributing your skills to an organization to awaken that old-time feeling of community. Talent Historical Society was on crutches just a few short months ago, but a new preacher is in town, so to speak, and with the tonic of new blood, in the form of 4 new board members and other interested parties, THS has managed to stand on its own. History is in the making in our own lifetimes and I want to ensure that when and if they speak of us when we are dead and gone, that they remember that we didn't let the fire go out, that we found a way to energize the community and hold on to what is important. Please join the board or lend a hand and we will find a way to incorporate your skills.

Thank you, Jan Wright



Memberships

New:

Teresa Cooke
Carol J. Nosko
Willow & Ryon Nauth
Emmalisa & Ruby Whalley
Steven Feigner

Philip Lee
Advanced Business Teleservices
Bobby & Julie Townsend
Ryan & Carly Pederson
Jim & Marguerite Schellentrager

Renewals:

Jan Wright
Star Properties
Darby Stricker
Chuck & Colleen Eccleston
Dianne Hunt

Ron & Stella Medinger
Bob & Belinda Vos
Grail & Phyllis Douglas
Dwayne & Kathy Guthrie
Genevieve Windsor

Honorary Member:

Talent Chamber of Commerce

Something YOU can do to help!

If you do any shopping on Amazon.com, use the link below to enter the Amazon website. The price doesn't change, but the Historical Society receives a donation from each purchase. Any purchases you make will help support the Talent Historical Society and its projects. Thanks!!

<http://www.amazon.com/?%5Fencoding=UTF8&tag=talent-histosoc-20>

New Look for the THS Newsletter

by Belinda Vos

As you may have noticed, *The Historacle* has a new look!

Our newsletter will continue its tradition of providing historical based articles as well as including photos of Talent's pioneer families and our area's early days.

The Talent Historical Society participates in several community events throughout the year, and we will also give you updates on those activities. Upcoming events will be listed on the back page of each issue.

We also intend to include full contact information, museum hours, a list of the board of directors, and a membership form as well.

Our Facebook page has become quite popular and we will have ongoing articles dealing with postings as well as our new "Ask Jan" feature.

Tuesday Night at the Museum is a new event for us and we will keep you informed as to speakers and topics.

Memberships are so important to our continued financial success, and we will be acknowledging those who have kindly supported us.

We would like to thank Nick Medinger and Fun Again Games in Ashland for allowing us the use of their commercial copy machine for printing our newsletter.

We hope you will enjoy this new format and that it will provide timely and interesting information about the Talent Historical Society.



Talent Tomato Sale a Success

There's nothing quite like biting into a juicy, ripe tomato right out of your garden, and southern Oregon's hot, dry summers make for a great environment to grow these home garden favorites.

On May 9th, as part of Talent's City Wide Yard Sale, THS opened its doors to welcome visitors to a unique plant sale. After being lost for many years, plants grown from the seeds of the unique Talent Tomato were once again offered for sale to the public.

Jackson County has two cities with their own tomatoes. Clarence Holdridge, a local farmer here in Talent, was growing Medford tomato plants for the Bagley cannery in Ashland. He discovered a sport among the hundreds of plants he was growing which was better than the Medford tomato. He saved the seeds from this special plant, growing them successfully the next year. However, due to the cannery closing, the tomato market collapsed and commercial growing ended. One envelope of the rare seeds remained, but were "lost" in a drawer for 18 years. After they were found, 60% of the seeds sprouted.

Greenleaf Industries in Grants Pass grew the plants for us, and they did a wonderful job. Established in 1981, Greenleaf Industries is a private, non-profit corporation, serving as the Northwest's largest horticultural training center, providing training and employment opportunities to eighteen men and women who have varying developmental disabilities. They have a



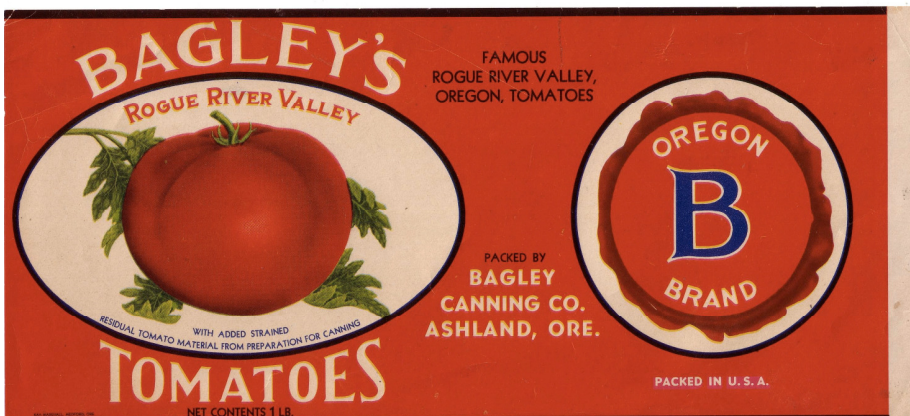
seasonal, retail store located at 150 Union Ave. Grants Pass, OR as well as growing plants for wholesale distribution. You may reach them at (541) 472-8903 or check out their website at: www.greenleafindustries.org. The specially grown Talent tomatoes were offered as both 4" starts and gallon plants. By the end of the day, all the tomato plants were sold and the sale was deemed a huge success.

Talent Tomato t-shirts were also available featuring a special logo created by board member Willow Nauth. Some shirts remain and can be purchased for \$15 at the museum during regular hours or you may call (541) 512-8838 for further information. The shirts are available in appropriate sizes for adult women and men and for youth and come in these colors: red, grey, black and white. For a small, additional charge, we can also mail them.

Due to the interest and success of this sale, we plan on making it an annual event.

As the summer progresses, we welcome feedback as to how everyone's plants are growing. Thanks to all of you who purchased the plants and have helped support the Society. In the months to come, we hope you will enjoy the flavorful goodness of these wonderful examples of Talent's heritage.

Happy Eating!!



First Fruits

by Jan Wright

For early settlers of Wagner Creek, waves of grain were not only beautiful to behold but also promised a source of income. Field crops were sown each year and carefully stored in cellars; kitchen garden greens and peas in the spring had a tonic effect after a long winter, but it was the sweet taste of fruit that brought the settlers the most pleasure and made their farm labors worth the effort. Eve would hardly have been able to tempt Adam with a potato; she chose wisely and appealed to his sweet tooth with some kind of fruit.

Fruits also symbolized a family's permanence on a farmstead that the sowing of annual seeds just didn't conjure. Planting a grape vine or an apple tree announced a commitment to the homestead. When a family moved on, the grape vines and fruit trees remained where they had been planted. In 1874, for instance, John Beeson's 1853 log cabin on Wagner Creek had been stripped of its roof and floorboards, but the walls that held up a grapevine still served as an arbor.

Grapes were the first fruits on the John and Ann Beeson donation land claim. The vines produced fruit years ahead of the apples, peaches, and other tree fruits. When Welborn Beeson, the son of John and Ann, excitedly proclaimed in 1859 that he got a total of 8 apples off all 30 of the apple trees on the farm, the grapes had already been in use for several years, producing wine, jelly, juice, and raisins. At the first Jackson County fair in 1859, Beeson's 4.5 pounds of prize grapes won what he called a "diploma" (possibly the equivalent of a blue ribbon).

Articles in the newspaper during the 1870's and '80's urged Rogue Valley farmers to make a living off the vines instead of grains, leading to a flurry of grape cuttings being exchanged from neighbor to neighbor throughout the valley. Over and over the papers claimed that the climate and soils of the valley rivaled those of California, and even Europe. Such proclamations may have been what prompted Beeson's neighbor, David Stearns, to turn his fields over to grapes and to consult with a Frenchman on how to make them lucrative.

Welborn helped Orlando Coolidge

set out 3000 grape cuttings to grow in his nursery near Bear Creek. Grapes were included in a list of blessings at the annual year-end assessment that Beeson always wrote in his diary. To impress his sweetheart, Esther Ann Wagner, he brought her a bunch of grapes. In 1872, he hauled 100 pounds of the precious fruit in a freight wagon to Yreka to sell along with dried peaches and forty bushels of apples. That same year he brought grapes to little Franky Fitzgerald who was sick with a severe fever.

Grapes did not make a huge profit for the Beesons or any of the Wagner Creek residents, but homemade wine was definitely a part of the area's social gatherings, dances and holidays.



DON'T MISS OUT!!

Would you like timely email reminders about upcoming events at the Talent Historical Society? If so, contact us at: talenthistory.membership@gmail.com or call and leave a message at (541) 512-8838. Or just drop by the museum and leave us your information. We'll send notices out including all the information about upcoming events.

Tuesday Evening at the Museum

We've started a new series of get-togethers we're calling "Tuesday Evening at the Museum" which are held on the fourth Tuesday of every month from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the THS museum. They are short, informal presentations on the subject of the evening, followed by questions from, and discussion by, those in attendance.

In March, we had a very good turnout for our very first event, featuring authors Jo-Brew and Pat Edwards who spoke about the history of Highway 99 in the development of Talent. In April, a local train historian, Tony Johnson, did a wonderful presentation on the railroading history of the Talent area. The May, Tuesday Evening at the Museum program featured our own Jan Wright who gave a presentation and lead a discussion on the Beeson Diaries which we have been following on our Facebook page.

We will be continuing our programs throughout the summer. On June 23, Bob Casebeer will present a talk on "The Rogue River Indian Wars". The speaker and topic for the July 28 talk is yet to be decided and will be announced at a later date. On August 25, Keith Liddy will be presenting "A History of Fly Fishing the Rogue ,with a special interest in Zane Gray." He will bring some fly tying vises and have an interactive demonstration with volunteers from the audience. More information on each of these programs will be made available on our Facebook page as well as through email notifications.

The Talent Historical Society is committed to bringing information concerning Talent's history to the public, and we hope that these discussions will be entertaining as well as informative.

So, please come and join us as we explore Talent's history. The meetings are open to the public and you do not need to be a member to attend.



From Our Facebook Page

To read all the THS posts and information, "like" us on Facebook

Find us at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/819998034709417/>

Or go to www.facebook.com and type Talent Historical in the search bar at the top of the page . Then from the options shown, choose Talent Historical Society (Public Group)

The Talent Historical Society premiered its current Facebook page on October 3, 2014. Since that time, our readership has steadily increased and we now have 179 members who have joined our page. Social media has become an important communication tool for many organizations such as ours and it offers current information about what's happening in our group.

Our Facebook page also provides a way for people who have an interest in the history of Talent and the surrounding area to become better acquainted with what our Society has to offer.

For those that don't live in the area and perhaps can't attend our events, it offers an ongoing way to be involved and feel very much a part of our group.

Up to date information concerning events are posted which give details about speakers and reminds followers of when and where things are taking place.

Besides providing current information, we also have a special posting each day concerning one of

Talent's most prominent pioneer citizens. The Beeson family came overland to Oregon in 1853, settling in Jackson County along Wagner Creek. In 1851, when Welborn Beeson was fifteen years old, he began to keep a diary and continued to do so until his death in 1893. His diary reflects Welborn's surroundings in the Rogue Valley, the weather, crops, political events, social events, and Indian affairs. The diaries have been transcribed and are an important part of the Historical Society's archives.

Every morning, moderator Ron Medinger posts Welborn's diary entry from 150 years ago, currently 1865. Through his eyes, we see what life was like living on a homestead in Jackson County. Over the past few months, we have learned of his "love sickness" over a beautiful young woman who has turned down his marriage proposal, weather reports and his complicated relationship with his father, John. Also during this time period, we've read of the assassination of president Lincoln and how long it took for the news to



Welborn Beeson

reach Wagner Creek.

Adding to the experience, followers are encouraged to post comments about what they are reading. As we marvel at Welborn's very busy social life, we are also aware of how much work went into maintaining a homestead. What a unique, real-time glimpse of life in 1865.

So, please join us as we revisit the Talent area in 1865 as well as keep up to date on Talent in 2015!!!



Many followers of our Facebook page have asked some interesting questions while we've been reading Welborn Beeson's diary entries, especially about the history of Talent and the area. Jan Wright - Former Executive Director and current Board President of the Talent Historical Society has agreed to answer some questions for us. So if you have a question, email it to askthsjan@gmail.com and every week, she will answer three questions from the requests she gets. Her answers will be posted every Sunday evening on our Facebook page for you to see. The questions don't have to be about Welborn's diary or even the Beeson's specifically. They can be

about anything you are curious about concerning the history of Talent.

Question from March 1: Many people have asked: "Where, relative to today's geographical locations, did Welborn live while he was writing the 1865 entries to his diary?"

Answer : Welborn and family were living in the Hexagonal house on Wagner Creek Road when he wrote this 1865 portion of the diary. That house is still standing today and was known as the "Nut Farm" for many years. In the 1890's, Julius Foss bought the house and 25 acres of the Beeson land and dramatically remodeled the house to look more conventional. The Hexagonal house was patterned after Orson Fowler's book about Octagonal houses - John Beeson knew Orson Fowler and probably suggested the design to Welborn.

lands surrounding the city. All varieties of grapes grew and matured to perfection. Of the European types, the leading commercial varieties were Flame Tokay, Malaga, Emperor and Black Cornichon. According to the trial testimony, during the past thirty years of grape production, the winter and spring temperature had never been low enough to winter kill any of the grapes that have been planted. Testimony also was given that over-production of the four types of commercial grapes just listed was not a grower's worry, because the climatic zones where these fine table grapes can be grown in the United States is so limited that if ten times as many acres were planted in the Rogue River valley, the supply would not meet the demand.

Further testimony indicated that grapes grown in this district can be grown without irrigation, as the grapes on the dry hill lands mature without irrigation, and that fact is the secret to their keeping and shipping qualities which excel over similar grapes produced by irrigation. Testifiers pointed out that grape shipments by rail to all the eastern states did not require icing; and the grapes arrived in good condition after eight to ten days on the rail lines. Other testimony indicated that from 1910 to 1914 the maximum selling price for Josephine county grapes in New York City was double the price secured in Portland, Oregon.



Southern Oregon Grape Festival

On May 30, the 2nd Annual Southern Oregon Grape Festival was held in downtown Talent. Vendors from throughout the area showcased their goods and celebrated the wine industry. Plein air art and photography competitions were held and live music was heard throughout the day. The Talent Chamber of Commerce sponsored the event and invited participants to celebrate our area's rich history and future of the grape.

THS hosted a booth commemorating the historical importance of grapes in our area, and a contest was held to see who has the oldest grape vine in the Talent area. Diameter measurements and photos were requested so that a record of the historical, old grape vines can now be kept. A raffle was held for a grape plant started from a vine grown by Oregon pioneers dating back to 1854.

Society members were available to answer questions concerning historic grape growing as well as to promote the Talent Historic Society in general. Handouts detailing historical information concerning grapes were distributed, and membership applications were also available.

Our presence at such events is an important part of our goal of providing historical information about our area, and we enjoy supporting events such as this which bring visitors to Talent.

The Talent Historical Society Membership Application

The Talent Historical Society was founded in 1994 as a non-profit organization dedicated to collecting, preserving and interpreting the history of the Talent area in Southern Oregon. By becoming a member of the Society, you provide valuable support of the Society's ongoing work.

To become a member, please select a membership level, complete the form below, and return the completed form along with your membership payment. All memberships, regardless of level, are greatly appreciated.

Name	_____
Street Address	_____
City, State, Zip	_____
Phone	_____ e-mail _____
Member Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing
Membership Level:	<input type="checkbox"/> Student - \$10 <input type="checkbox"/> Individual - \$20 <input type="checkbox"/> Family - \$30 <input type="checkbox"/> Business - \$50 <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsors - \$100 or more
Amount Enclosed:	\$ _____
Dues include our quarterly newsletter: <i>The Historacle</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check to receive <i>The Historacle</i> electronically, sent by email in lieu of paper.	
Please make checks payable to:	Talent Historical Society
Send completed form along with payment to:	Talent Historical Society P.O. Box 582 Talent, OR 97540
Thank you!	

Talent Historical Society Board of Directors:

Jan Wright	President
Margay Garrity	Vice-President
Bob Casebeer	Secretary
Emmalisa Whalley	Treasurer
Ron Medinger	Membership Chair
Ryan Pedersen	City Council Liaison
Willow Nauth	Board Member
Van Tribble	Board Member

The Monthly Talent Historical Society Board Meeting is held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the museum building at 105 North Market Street, Talent, Oregon

All interested persons are invited to attend.



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

Upcoming Events

June 9	THS Board Meeting	6:00 p.m.	At the Museum
June 23	Tuesday Evening at the Museum	6:30 - 8:00 p.m.	Bob Casebeer "Rogue River Indian Wars"
July 9	THS Board Meeting	6:00 p.m.	At the Museum
July 28	Tuesday Evening at the Museum	6:30 - 8:00 p.m.	Speaker and topic to be announced later
August 11	THS Board Meeting	6:00 p.m.	At the Museum
August 25	Tuesday Evening at the Museum	6:30 - 8:00 p.m.	Keith Liddy "A History of Fly Fishing the Rogue, with a Special Interest in Zane Grey"
Sept. 8	THS Board Meeting	6:00 pm	At the Museum
Sept. 22	Tuesday Evening at the Museum	6:30 - 8:00 p.m.	Speaker TBA
October 3	Saturday - Talent Harvest Festival The Historical Society will be participating and the museum will be open to the public.		