

Lane County
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The Lane County Historical Society

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Early Impressions of the Oregon Country

The Lane County Historical Society

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Cover

Some of our earliest views of Lane County come via sketches in the 1884 book, An Illustrated History of Lane County, published by A. H. Walling. This scene depicts the Jacob Spores residence, near Coburg. What the country was like in the earliest days, and what the pioneers thought of it, is the topic of our feature, "Settlers' First Impressions. . ." page 6.

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Footnotes to history

A compendium of items, historic or otherwise, about Lane County and vicinity. We hear from a student at the Landax School, 1905 era. And we recount some of the names of Lane County landmarks, including the lake on top of the South Sister.

About the little girl with the staple in her tummy

Last issue we ran a photo of about 20 grammar school students in front of the primitive Landax School on a site now buried beneath Lookout Point Reservoir. ["Life on Rush Island before the flood of '54," page 63].

The date of the photo: about 1905—just 13 years short of a century ago. We never dreamed, as we assembled the layout, that any of those young students would attempt to get in touch with us.

Yet something about the young faces appealed to us. They looked so earnest, so serious, so naive, sort of, peering at us from the wilderness that was Oregon in 1905, little suspecting that where they stood would slumber beneath deep water half a century later or that their picture would run in a historical journal in a presumably more sophisticated time of computers, satellites, television, and McDonald's hamburgers.

What interesting conversations could we have had if they could speak with us today? What would they tell us about that little school and about their subsequent lives?



One day our phone rang. One of those youngsters, yes, one of those very same kids pictured in front of Landax School, came on the line.

"I'm the little girl with the staple in her tummy," said the voice.

The little girl was now about 95 years old. She spoke with a firm, husky voice, even as she admitted her memory of those school days had dimmed over time. She was in the first grade then. She's not sure, but she thinks she arrived at school each day by riding a horse. School lasted for only three months of the year. She cannot remember the name of her teacher. She spent only one three-month session at Landax, later moving to Oakridge, then to Portland where she finished at Lincoln High School.

What she especially remembered about Landax School was noise and confusion. One-room schools tended to be that way—each class reciting lessons in earshot of students from other grades. It was hard for a first-grader to concentrate, she remembered. But it was fun being little because all of the bigger kids took care of you, sort of. Among the games they played outside during recess was "annie over": rolling a ball over the roof of the school to be caught by the team on the other side—back and forth until the bell rang ending recess.

The little girl's name was Hallie Hills. She came from pioneer stock. Her grandfather, Cornelius Hills, crossed the plains to Oregon in 1847—and again eastward in 1850, then back to Oregon with his bride in 1851. One of Cornelius' sons, Jasper—for whom the community of Jasper is named—became Hallie's father. Jasper had a firm commitment to education, and he insisted that Hallie attend school regularly even when it would have been easy to drop out.

Hallie Hills married a football hero who became prominent in business and public affairs in Eugene. C. A. ("Shy") Huntington played quarterback on the only University of Oregon football team ever to win a Rose Bowl game (1917). In 1920, as Oregon football coach, he took another team to the Rose Bowl where Oregon lost by one point.

Urged on by her historical heritage, Hallie Huntington has devoted a lifetime to the study and dissemination of Lane County history. She served for a time as president of the Lane County Historical Society, and she continues to serve on its board of directors. She has written for the *Lane County Historian* and elsewhere not only about her grandfather's three crossings of the plains, but about numerous other elements of local history.

Quotable Quotes in History

"What a pleasant hill! This is my claim."—Elijah Bristow in 1846 upon observing the knoll, not far from the Willamette River, that we now know as Pleasant Hill.

What's in a name?

Clearly the hallmark of any Lane County outdoorsman is the ability to bake biscuits under primitive conditions outdoors. History records that not all attempts were successful. Two were so spectacularly unsuccessful that the incidents are preserved in the names of landmarks. One is "Sinker Mountain" above Fall Creek, so named when some hunters were forced to eat less-than-savory biscuits made with

soda, popularly known as sinkers. The other is "Deathball Rock" above the McKenzie River near Blue River, so named after another biscuit fiasco. (From *Oregon Geographic Names*, by Lewis L. McArthur, 6th ed., 1992.)

Sometime in the early years, Mrs. Lewis Martin and her husband sold a cow to purchase enough silk fabric to make a dress. Unfortunately, upon their return home they had to drive their wagon across a rain-swollen creek that empties into the coast fork of the Willamette River by Cottage Grove. The swift waters jostled the wagon and the parcel of silk fell off and washed downstream, irretrievably lost. The stream thereafter became known as Silk Creek. (From *Golden Was the Past*.)

Oregon has a second crater lake, the highest lake in Oregon, near the summit of the South Sister in the southeast corner of Lane County. In 1969 the noted Oregon photographer David Falconer and his family climbed to the top of the mountain. The family included three young Falconer girls, Elizabeth, Patricia, and Peggy. The girls inquired about the name of the lake. Apparently it had no name. They suggested "Teardrop Pool" to the Oregon Geographic Names Board, and the name was duly approved. (*Oregon Geographic Names*.)

Significant dates in Lane County history

1778. In March, Captain James Cook sailed along the Oregon Coast; he claimed to see snow along the coast. He observed in his log that while the

area might be a pleasant summer prospect, it now had rather a disagreeable aspect. He may have mistaken for snow the sand dunes that extend along the coast in what we know as Lane, Douglas, and Coos Counties. Equally disagreeable to Cook was the Oregon weather, prompting him to attach the name "Cape Foul Weather" to a headland on the central coast.

1847. Mary Skinner joined her husband in Eugene, the community's first non-native woman resident.

1848. Leonora C. Skinner became the first non-native child born in the Eugene area, daughter of Eugene F. and Mary Skinner.

1849. A lot of Eugene residents left for the California gold rush with resultant population loss. But not Hilyard Shaw—he took up a donation land claim where the U. of O. now stands, built a cabin beneath the Condon Oaks where he conceived a pretty good idea: connect two sloughs with the Willamette River to form a millrace to provide industrial power.

1850. First Eugene post office opened in Eugene Skinner's home.

1850. Lane County's first church established at Pleasant Hill.

1852. Eugene population reached 40. Hilyard Shaw completed the millrace and built a sawmill.

1853. Methodist Church, first church in Eugene, built at 10th and Willamette.

1864. Eugene adopted its first city charter and elected Eugene Skinner mayor.

1876. Ferry Street Bridge built.

1894. Heceta Head lighthouse began

- operation.
1904. An automobile came to Eugene, its first.
1906. Total automobile count in Eugene: 4.
1908. Florence's first Rhododendron Festival.
1912. Sisters of Mercy opened "Mercy Hospital and Nurses Training School," later known as Sacred Heart Hospital.
1927. Eugene's first commercial radio station, KORE, began broadcasting.
1934. Massive tree planting campaign on Skinner Butte.
1937. "Save Spencer Butte" group formed to forestall logging of the butte.
1956. Vol. 1, No. 1 of *Lane County Historian*. Contents included a directory of members with account of their pioneer heritage. The 110 members on the list cited 89 ancestors who had arrived in Oregon via pioneer wagon trails.

Canoeing at Oregon

By Elizabeth Lewis, U.O. Class of 1913

Reprinted from *Oregon Monthly*,
U.O. student magazine, May 1911

Canoeing, which is one of the most distinctive and popular of all Oregon's out-door activities and pastimes, is not, contrary to the general opinion, a time-honored institution which has existed since the founding of the University in 1871. Those old grads of the '70s and '80s completed their college education without a course in paddling or a course in preparing Sunday morning breakfasts in some sheltered nook "up the race"; they never knew the joy of a sudden and unexpected plunge to the

bottom, the fun in fishing yourselves, pillows, and rugs out, of righting your canoe again, and of sneaking home under the conveniently overhanging branches and shrubs and thence up a back street, in the back door, and up to your room for much needed repairs. Although the millrace has been here since early in the '80s, and the Willamette has always flowed past the campus, canoeing was an unknown and untried joy until the spring of 1907. Until then the college students were contented to row about in flat-bottomed skiffs and rowboats, or enjoyed the beauties of the race and river from the banks, or from Lover's Lane, the only walk running between the two. However, there were a few students in the University in the spring of 1907 who were less easily satisfied than their fellow students with the use made of the race, and who were capable of appreciating the extraordinary possibilities which it possessed for canoeing. Three of those varsity men built canoes for themselves—Lloyd Mott, Warner, and Elton—while Billy Huggins had a Racine shipped to him from Portland. It is not known whether these canoes were started upon their initial trips with the due pomp and ceremony which was fitting to the introduction of so important an institution, but it is certain that four more popular and envied men never attended Oregon. For some time these four canoes were the only ones upon the race, but others soon made their appearance until now, only five years later, there is scarcely a college man who is not an adept paddler, and, indeed, many of the Co-eds manage their canoes with remarkable skill and dex-



The Eugene millrace circa 1908 before canoes became common. The primary vehicle then was the flat-bottomed rowboat, as seen here at McClanahan's Landing. Mr. McClanahan is at left, and the young woman in the photo, Pearl LaPorte, eventually became the mother of Don Hunter, of Eugene, famed for his audio-slide presentations. (Photo: U.O. Archives.)

terity, holding their own with anyone. From four, the number has increased to nearly 100 belonging to various college students, faculty members, fraternities, and boat-houses.

Mixups and other misdemeanors

Our fall issue, the one showing Mahlon Sweet cruising along a muddy road in 1911, had a few problems. Because of

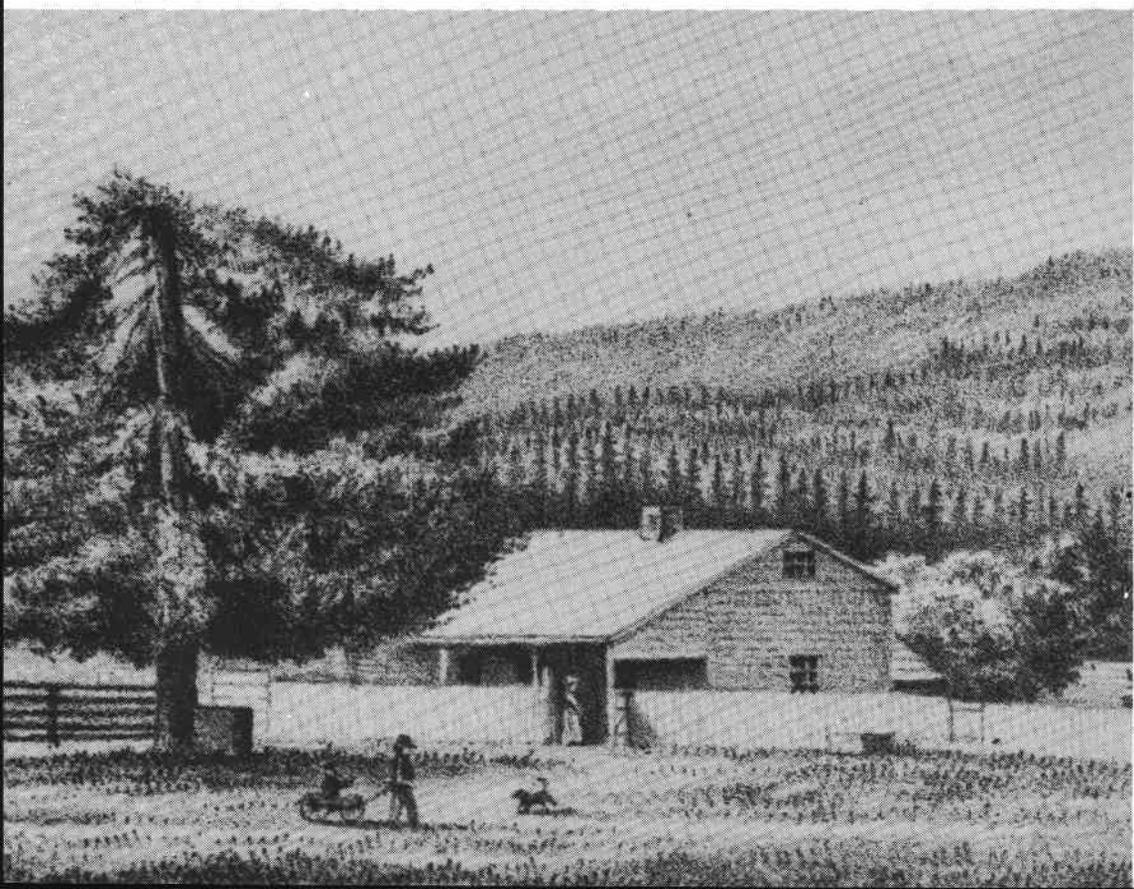
an error at the print shop, some of the pages got mixed up in a few of the copies—not many, just enough to bring requests for “clean” copies, which we sent promptly. If anyone else has a copy with mixed up pages, please let us know and we'll send another. Also, Carl Stevens, of Walterville, advises us that the Eugene Farmer's Cooperative driver identified as Dan Warrant (page 67) should have read Dan Warnock, as Carl knew the driver personally.

Settlers' first impressions of the promised land

They dreamed about the new land; they endured enormous hardships crossing the plains to Oregon. What did they think and feel once they arrived? They were too busy to say much.

By Marty West

Carving a civilization out of the wilderness. Lane County's first house, built by Elijah Bristow at Pleasant Hill sometime after his arrival in 1846, is depicted in sketch below in the Walling history, published in 1884.



Historians have plenty of material—countless trail diaries and personal recollections—at hand when describing the adventures of pioneers crossing the plains along the Oregon Trail. But we don't have many original sources to tell us what the immigrants did when they reached this "promised land" of Oregon. Fewer still give candid observations of how the immigrants felt when, after months of arduous travel, they viewed Western Oregon for the first time.

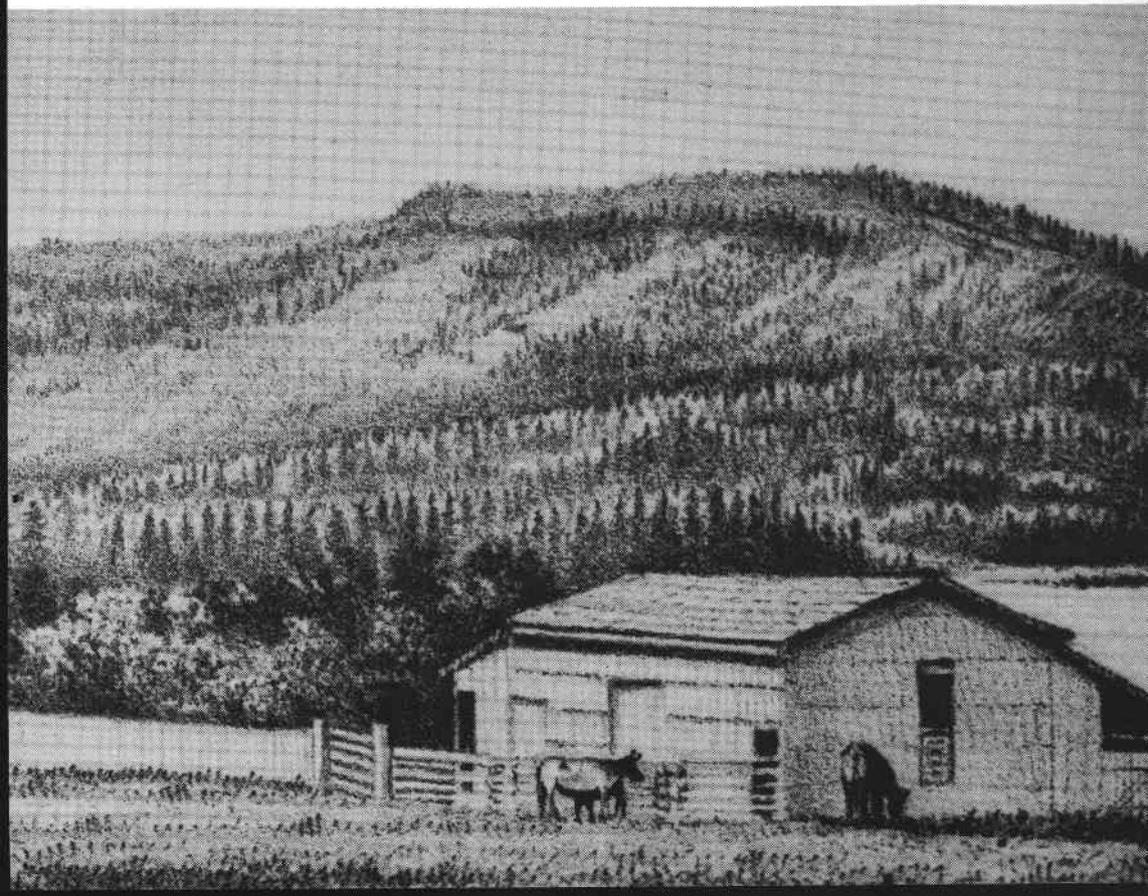
Good reasons exist for this paucity of material. The immigrants were too busy preparing to face their first Or-

egon winter. They had no time to record their first impressions.

Yet I was curious to know if this promised land met their expectations. Were the skills they brought useful in their new surroundings? What was most important in their lives at the time?

In a search for the answers, I located five good sources:

1. Personal recollections.
2. Correspondence kept as family treasures.
3. Published biographies and compilations such as Walling and Bancroft.
4. Newspaper clippings.
5. Most interesting of all, "Transactions of Oregon Pioneer Association," a



published account of a pioneer society begun in 1873 to collect from living witnesses the available facts and impressions of Oregon pioneer life.

For this study, I selected a representative group of settlers who arrived in the Willamette Valley between 1845 and 1860.

One example is William Willis Cooke who wrote to his parents in North Carolina after his arrival in 1852.

Dear Father and Mother:

I embrace the present opportunity to write you a few lines to let you know where we are and what we are doing. We are in Oregon near a little town called Champoeg about 25 miles above Oregon City on the Willamette River.

I am well pleased with this country so far as I have seen. . . the land is very rich. The mountains are all heavy timbered from the smallest twig to three hundred feet high. The largest one I have heard of measured 45 feet around. The timber is fir, oak and cedar, the cedar grows very large and thick. I have seen it 25 feet round at the stump.

In many places the timber is so large and thick that it would be almost impossible to make a farm. . . Where the timber is not so thick the hazel is so thick as it can stand. . . about as high as a man's head. Some of the hazel grows large enough for hand spikes, ax handles, bows and about as tough as hickory. . . .

To tell you of my losses on the plains, I lost 4 head of steers, 3 head of cows and 1 horse. . . I threw away one bed. .

. . . When a man starts this trip he may expect to lose half of all he has. If he gets through alive, he does well.

A second letter:

I forgot to tell you about the climate. . . it rains here all winter. Stock need no feed in this country. . . fatten hogs on wheat. . . but hogs is scarce. . . .

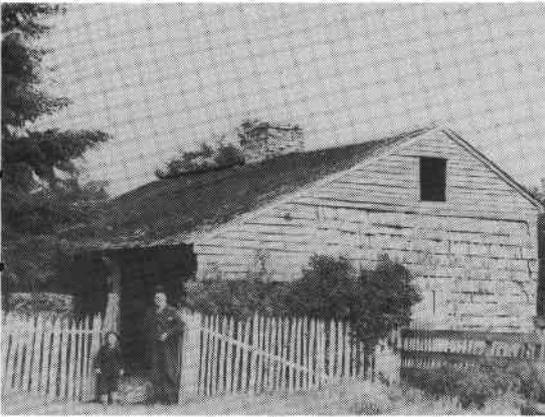
Then a week later:

We had some bad luck since we got in. . . our little baby that was born in the Umatilla died. It died on the 8th of October. It was never well. Patsy got a fall from a horse in Grande Ronde which hurt her very much. I thought this was the cause of its death.

We are well at present. . . the children are all fine and fat. Patsy's health is very good at present. She is just getting over sore eyes. She was nearly blind at one time. I forgot to tell you our little baby's name that died was Leah Arabella. Tell Mother we named it after her and Aunt Arabella.

The documents of pioneer struggles suggest that time was important to the settlers. Their initial task was a race against the onslaught of winter—to select their land, build shelters, and stock provisions. With time so precious, few pioneers wrote diaries during this period of settling in. But, fortunately, a little later, when circumstances permitted, some took moments to reflect on those initial activities.

Author Marty West is curator of special collections at the Lane County Historical Museum Library. This article is adapted from a speech she gave to the Lane County Historical Society last year.



The Bristow house, shown years after the scene sketched on pages six and seven, shows Elijah Bristow's grandson, William L. Bristow, and the latter's son, Arlo.

One such account was written by John L. Wigle whose party came from Illinois and settled in Linn County in 1852. They came via the Columbia River, stopping briefly at Vancouver and Oregon City. There they stayed with an uncle and sought medical treatment for John's sister who was ill from a "mountain fever" epidemic that had caused several deaths on the trail. As they waited, some of the party proceeded down the valley to find land and build shelter. John described the trip south from Oregon City to near Brownsville:

Leaving Uncle Joe Hunsaker's we had yet forty miles to travel. The roads were very muddy and it required two days drive to make that distance. . . . The next day we went to the place that they had selected about six miles distance. They had hauled logs from the mountains three miles east and built a log house.

Then came the rains. When lowland floodwaters lapped at the doorstep, they struck out for a homesite near Muddy Creek. But an "old bachelor" had squatted unwelcome on their claim:

He could not be peaceably induced to abandon it, so in preference to trouble with him, father decided to quit the place.

Work on homesite Three began about a mile north of Harrisburg. Twelve inches of snow subsequently fell, but by then the new house was ready. From here they could look over at the mountains and see the oxen feeding on the green grass. But they discovered another problem:

All the valley between them and us was literally plowed up by the mice and gophers, and there was no grass in the valley, and so we had to leave the stock at the mountains. . . . Because of there being no grass and it being plentiful at the hills and green all the winter, we hitched up our horses, and having lived in our brand new house only four days, we pulled out from it to hunt a home nearer the hills.

They bought house Four from the same "old bachelor" who had squatted on the claim by Muddy Creek. For \$200 they secured a one-room log cabin. All seven members of the family moved into it in mid-January.

Despite such travails, the pioneers claimed to love their new homeland. That is a common thread running through most of the recollections—at least those written by men. Many were



Shortly after settling in, Oregon pioneers developed primitive schools, of which this is typical. Scene was near present-day Westfir in 1903. Building eventually burned down. (Photos from Lane County Historical Museum.)

ecstatic. John Wigle's reaction was typical:

We are now once more in a place that we call home, a place where the land is as free as the air we breathe. Oh! What a home it is in this Oregon we have come to. We have a wide, wide prairie, not a tree of any kind growing upon it, no semblance of any fence of any kind within a mile of it.

Women's reactions to the new land seemed more guarded. In 1895 Mrs. Robert Miller, giving a speech to a group of pioneers, posed the question, why did women come to Oregon?

Women came because men came. While

many women were enthusiastic to undertake the journey, the majority came in obedience to man's judgment, whether or not in accord with her own. She came for love's sweet sake and the heroic desire to be helpmate to her husband, whatever his ambition.

She left the security of family and friends, established schools and churches and her social groups. She was expecting many changes, but she was little prepared for the immediate disappointments and fears and longings. Her feelings were most often kept hidden as she firmly adhered to her purpose.

Women had already overcome adversity of the arduous trip west. It took

another adjustment to adapt to Oregon's rain and constant overcast skies while awaiting construction of a first home, which was rarely more than 14 feet square. And it was lonely—seldom closer than three miles from the nearest neighbor. The house contained a puncheon floor and a mud chimney. The space between logs was stuffed with clay to keep the elements out. It had no pane of glass or sawed lumber. Furniture often consisted of articles hewed from fir trees with an ax.

The homemaker soon discovered that unannounced houseguests were part of pioneer life. The guests were entertained in a single room that was combined kitchen, bedroom, dining room, and parlor. Guests customarily brought their own blankets and slept on the floor with the children. Often the guests were circuit riders—judges or preachers.

Women's accounts of pioneer times



Pioneer circuit rider—this is the Rev. Driver, Methodist minister—provided “connection to God,” and often was unannounced company.

were often dramatic and personal. Mrs. Miller said:

Some women came to the end of their journey bereft of all that life holds dear; some so worn by sickness and care and the tedium of the trip they had no heart to begin life anew, and in sheer despair lay down and died; some cursed their fate, some prayed for help; some looked back over the death-strewn path and wept from day to day. Others dipped into the future as far as human eye could see and looked beyond the mists and clouds, caught a glimpse of the sun shining, and by that vision were made ready to meet life grandly.

Looking beyond the mists was a challenge. Oregon's rain was a nuisance to the settlers, and 1862 was a particularly bad year. Julia Rickard Travers writes about her father's problems that year on a farm near Monroe:

Father raised grain which he fed to stock, principally hogs. He built a log smokehouse and used to fill it with hams and bacon at butchering time. Father had already taken several loads of ham and bacon to Portland and was about ready to butcher another lot when the flood came. His hogs were carried away, and about sixty of them landed alive on Winkle Butte and were recovered. Most of the herd, however, were drowned.

Even as the pioneers settled in, everyday life remained a struggle, as John Wigle's account points out:

There were no factories, no public improvements and consequently most ev-

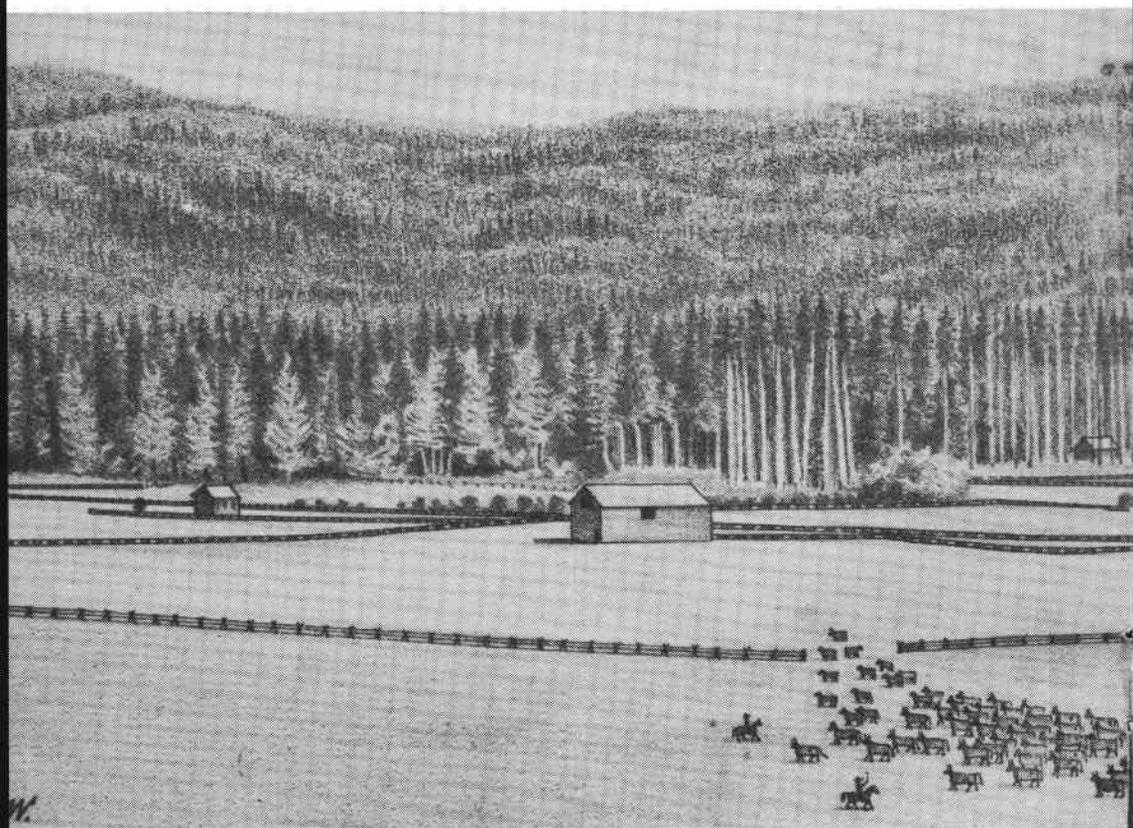
erything was homemade. The carding machine was miles away, but the good housekeeper could manage to buy or borrow some hand cards and do her own carding. Those skilled in carpentry could make a spinning wheel and by such means, with the help of the knitting needle, socks were made and most of the winter clothing home made.

The grainfields of wheat and oats could and did supply all our needs for headwear, even to our Sunday hats.

The ladies made their own sun bonnets, and they looked as becoming as the work baskets do on the ladies heads today.

Most recollections touched on farming. One account of a train of 99 wagons cited what may have been the grandest agricultural undertaking of all. In that 1847 train, one Henderson Luelling brought pear, cherry, plum, and apple seedlings in his "traveling

In Lane County, the land was wrested from timbered slopes and valleys, homes and barns built, with tidy farms gradually emerging. The Walling sketch below depicts farm residence of George Millican at Walterville, 1880s.



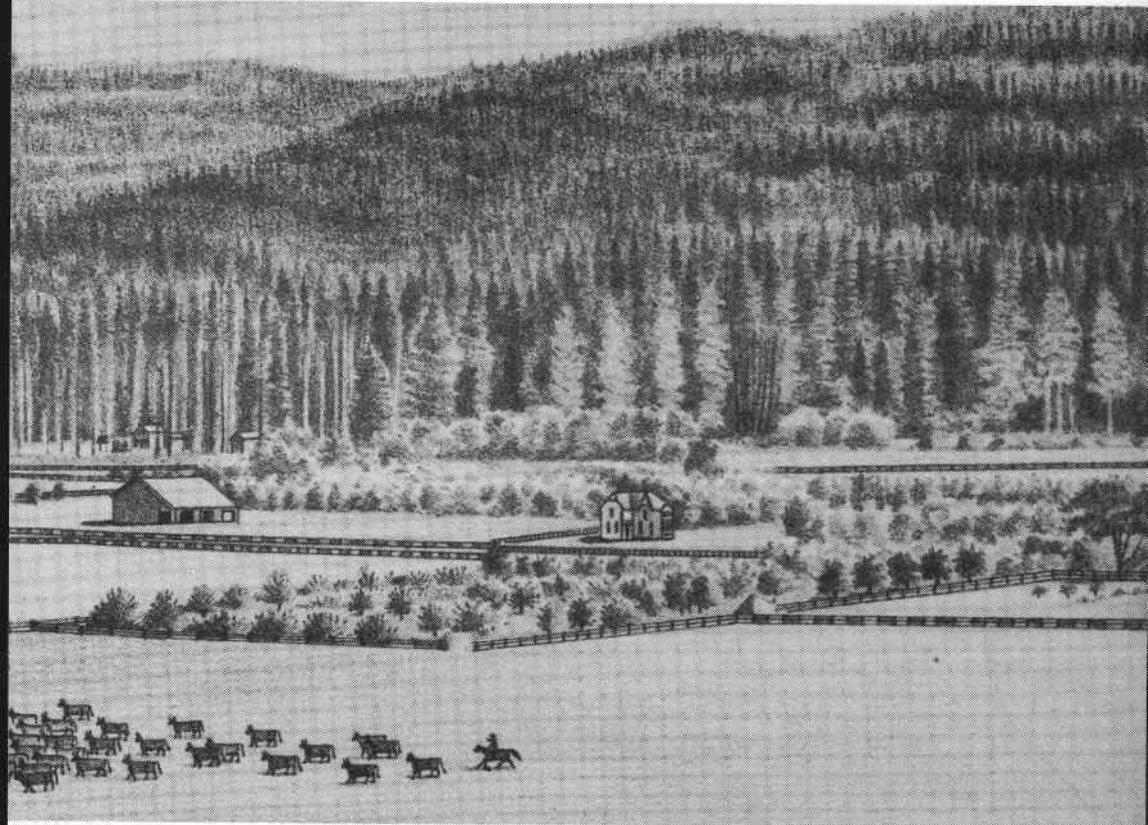
nursery." The episode was recounted by Ralph C. Geer of Marion County:

[Mr. Luelling] made two boxes 12 inches deep and just wide enough and long enough to fill the wagon bed and filled them with a compost consisting principally of charcoal and earth into which he planted about 700 trees and shrubs from 20 inches to four feet high. This was a very hazardous undertaking as it was an extremely heavy load. . . . This load of trees was the mother of all our early nurseries and orchards and gave Oregon a name and fame that she never would have had without it.

Some pioneers took unusual pains

settling in. One was Cornelius Joel Hills, who came to Lane County in 1847 via the Applegate Trail and settled on a donation land claim on the Middle Fork of the Willamette River. He spent the winter building a log cabin and making it as livable as possible.

In 1849 he took two horses and set out for the gold fields of California. Family accounts report that he walked along the Feather River bed and picked up gold nuggets with a kitchen spoon—worth \$150 to \$300 a day. By spring he had a sizable stake. In San Francisco he purchased farm machinery, including a plow, mower, rake, light farm wagons, harness, and a set of carpenter's tools. He booked passage



to Portland on a small sailing vessel, the *Hackstaff*, and carefully stowed his purchases aboard.

Unfortunately, the vessel ran aground on a sand bar at the mouth of the Rogue River. Passengers had to abandon their possessions and strike out toward the Oregon-California trail. After 24 days of near-starvation, the group reached the trail where it found help.

Hills returned to Oregon, fenced in his property, and recrossed the plains eastward in the spring. He married Sefhronia Briggs, and in 1851 Cornelius and members of the Hills and Briggs families returned to Oregon, settling in to blissful domesticity among the Indians.

Another name of note to us in Lane County is that of Francis Marion Wilkins. He tells us in his recollections that

In 1849 the discovery of gold in California drove every able bodied man the land round on a frenzied hunt for gold, leaving women and children at home alone. My father, Mitchell Wilkins, was one who took the trail south to the mines. He left my mother with two babies. With them was a boy of 14 to get on as best they could with the many jobs on the farm. Father discovered a hole just in the edge of the water of the Trinity River and took out nearly eight hundred dollars in nuggets. This laid the foundation for getting some stock cattle, and by 1854 he was able to plan for building a better home.

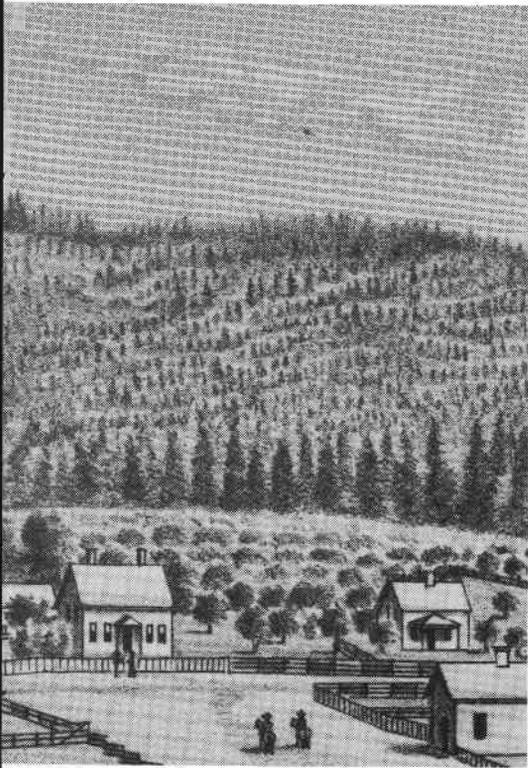
From such precarious beginnings, life got better. Francis Wilkins, for example, left the farm to go to business

college in Portland. He later owned his own pharmacy—reputed to be the best in Eugene. Active in civic affairs, he helped beautify the community—planting trees on Skinner Butte and establishing a park system, notably Hendricks Park, in Eugene.

Primitive schools soon followed the settling-in period. Wilkins' first education was in the local school house on his father's claim. Early residents pushed for schools, and as early as September 1849 the Common School Law was passed permitting counties to be divided into public school districts authorized to levy a 2-mill tax.

The first school in Eugene was in a farm house of Fielden McMurray in a locale now occupied by the University of Oregon. Miss Sarah Ann Moore, her salary paid by student tuition, came daily by horseback from Goshen to teach in this private school. All kinds of private schools flourished, languished, and decayed: grammar schools, select schools, academies, singing schools. The schools served as hubs of the settlements. John Wigle tells us of activities besides the spelling bees:

We often heard the pioneer preachers. Among these were Rev. Wilson Blaine, Rev. Robert Robe, Elders T. F. Campbell and Mulkey and H. H. Spaulding. The school being a free house we heard them all. And the politicians would sometimes come our way to air themselves with little shows of trickery. Here we heard the question of statehood for Oregon Territory discussed. . . . Most anything and everything that came along was welcomed at the school house.



Sketch shows the A. D. Hyland stock ranch, vicinity of Lowell.

Religion was equally vital. Trail diaries tell how important their faith was for the travelers. Conditions had not always allowed even the most devout to observe the Sabbath. Even after their arrival in the valley the immediate necessities of life—shelter and food—postponed their religious activities. Yet as one expressed it, the need for a “genuine connection to God” by way of an “official minister” was great. The circuit rider—a minister on horseback or wagon who often covered 75 miles square—met these needs.

My examination of such matters left me grateful for the personal accounts

that tell us things not written in the history books. Bless those settlers for taking time to record their recollections. From them I formed three conclusions.

1. The pioneers were grateful for the beauty and bounty of the Willamette Valley.

2. They accepted the conditions set upon them in a rugged and untried land.

3. They were determined to overcome all obstacles in order to make their new lives what they wanted them to be.

Not all of my questions about settling in were answered by the documents I consulted. But one document seemed to summarize much of what I learned. It was an extended obituary of a pioneer woman named Lucinda Spencer, who arrived in Salem in 1847 and died in 1888 having outlived two husbands. The author of her newspaper obituary seized the occasion to summarize most appropriately the life of the pioneer settler:

The men and women of the '40s and '50s were no common people—they were chosen or winnowed out of the intrepid, hardy, self-reliant pioneers of the west. They rocked the cradle of the infant provisional government, guided the youth of the territorial government, and looked with joy at the development into statehood. The women fulfilled their allotted part as well as the men in founding Christianity and education and the development of the natural resources of the country [so that for] their children, and the thousands that have come since, the way was made clear and easy.

William Tugman: Last of the crusading editors

A Harvard-educated student of government, he detested secrecy in public bodies, believed in the public's right to know, and had mixed feelings about Senator Wayne Morse.

By Dan Wyant

William Tugman often said that he considered Eugene-Springfield a "particularly contentious" community. Tugman served as managing editor and then editor of *The Register-Guard* in Eugene for 27 years, from 1927 to 1954.

Some of us on his news staff wondered if Tugman realized that his hard-hitting editorials were one of the prime reasons the community seemed stirred up much of the time. When you were a journalist trying to pry out the details of a news event—and trying to get some good quotes from the very officials Tugman was lambasting—the situation could be unpleasant.

Here's Tugman firing heavy artillery safely back behind the front lines, and you're the foot soldier in the trenches catching the returning shots from your outraged news sources.

Or so it seemed at the time. Now, in my mind, Tugman stands as one of the

last of the old-time crusading editors. He wrote what he thought was best for the community no matter whose feathers were ruffled. Born in Cincinnati in 1893, educated at Harvard, he came to Eugene from the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* where he had made a reputation as a police reporter taking on organized crime. In Eugene his editorials challenging the accountability of public officials were models for his news staff.

He could arouse both admiration and hostility. During his years as editor, said one observer, Tugman would "wheedle the town, and bludgeon it, laud it and castigate it, satirize it gently and attack it with cruel irony, win admirers and arouse deep personal enmities." (Warren C. Price in his book, *The Eugene Register-Guard*, 1976.)

As reporters during the Tugman era, we especially knew the enmities. An incident involving a young reporter named Tom Jaques is a case in point. Members of a city council committee



William M. Tugman of The Register-Guard.

ejected him from a meeting.

"I felt honored—I guess," said Jaques recalling the incident almost 40 years later. Then a cub reporter, he had been assigned to cover city government at a time when Tugman was critical of council policies. The meeting was a council "committee of the whole," held just before the council meeting. Tugman, a zealous advocate of free and open discussion of the public's business, considered these informal sessions to be *public* meetings and ordered his reporters to cover them—whenever we found out about them. They were seldom announced. On this occasion the committee's talk turned to highways.

"They asked me to leave at that point," recalled Jaques. The reporter replied that the paper considered this a public meeting and that he was expected to remain through the session. The committee was adamant. "I was young then, but somehow I found the courage to make them vote on it before I'd leave. It was my claim to fame." (The vote, Jaques recalled, was a close one, and the mayor supported his right to be there.)

Jaques, now retired, told Tugman the next morning that the committee had thrown him out. Tugman "just went bonkers," Jaques remembered. "He was very angry."

That was in the spring of 1954, Tugman's last year with the newspaper. He'd been feuding with the city council over "spot zoning," which the council proposed for the Riverview area of East Eugene. Spot zoning infuriated Tugman because it usually involved

special commercial or privileged exceptions that fractured the principles of overall city planning. Tugman also became increasingly troubled by the council's practice of meeting privately—sometimes at the members' homes—to decide what they should do at their regular public meeting. These events occurred before Oregon passed an open meetings law requiring that decisions on public matters be made at announced meetings open to press and public.

A climax came in April when Tugman wrote an editorial just before a council meeting dealing with the spot zoning proposal.

"It's our hope," he wrote, "that Eugene's city council chambers will be so packed with protesting people Monday night that an action will be impossible."

The Register-Guard's Tom Jaques was there to report what happened. After several routine actions, Calvin Crumbaker, the council president, moved to adjourn the meeting without considering the zoning matter. Before leaving the chambers, though, council members took turns expressing their heated opinions of Tugman and his editorials. Jaques reported that a "fairly large crowd" listened in silence.

Tempers frequently reached the boiling point over Tugman's editorials. People admired or despised him for his writings. Few community leaders remained impartial. Archie Weinstein, a downtown businessman and later a county commissioner, always called the newspaper "the Regrettable Guard."

But Tugman was a hero to many of

Author Dan Wyant retired in 1989 after 41 years with The Register-Guard.

THE WEATHER
Forecast for the week ending May 25, 1927.
High 65, low 45, wind S.W. 10 to 20.

Eugene Guard

OUR SERVICE
6:30 P. M. - 10:00 P. M.
The Eugene Guard is published every day except on Sunday and public holidays.

ESTABLISHED 1888. PUBLISHED WEEKLY. PRICE: ONE CENT PER COPY. YEARLY \$3.00. SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$3.00 PER ANNUM IN ADVANCE.

LINDBERGH OFF FOR PARIS

Andrews Quits Post as Chief of Prohibition

CITY NEWS
RESIGNATION IS EFFECTIVE ON AUGUST 1
Former Lieutenant Governor of New York Will Resign His

McAdoo and Hughes not Candidates
JOHN BAKER, the ex-governor of New York, who was defeated in the 1924 presidential election, is expected to be a candidate for the U. S. Senate in 1928.

PRICES SPEED UP RECEIVING STATION PLAN
General Satisfaction With Proposed in Paris in This District

HE'S ON HIS WAY IN PARIS TRIP
A young aviator, who has been making a name for himself in the world of aviation, is expected to return to the United States after a successful trip to Paris.

Youthful Aviator Has Close Calls As he Hops Off



Plane Daily Misses Road Scraper, Then Skims Telegraph Wire; No Radio Equipment is Taken Along

CHICAGO, N. Y. - The youthful aviator, who has been making a name for himself in the world of aviation, is expected to return to the United States after a successful trip to Paris.

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Start is Dramatic

MOOSE GROUPS TO MEET HERE SUNDAY
Story Hero Is Eugenean

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France Lights Way to Paris

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NEWBERG STUDENTS ON STRIKE OTHER OREGON COUNTRY NEWS

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an earlier generation at the University of Oregon for his strong stand that helped defeat a 1932 proposal that would have moved the university to Corvallis, leaving Eugene with only a "normal school" to train teachers.

The fight against this proposal, the "Zorn-McPherson Plan," was Tugman's first—and probably his fondest—crusade in Eugene. From May until December that year, the issue dominated the newspaper's editorial page and news columns.

Tugman, in his earlier days when the newspaper's staff was small, wrote news stories as well as editorials. The fact that he often became personally involved in the issues did not stop him from covering them as a reporter.

This sometimes shocked those of us fresh from journalism school where the "great god of objectivity" served as guide for reporting news events.

Journalism Professor Warren C. Price, in his history of the paper, took note of this tendency. "One may question the technical merit of Bill Tugman's covering many of the very news events in which he himself was participating," Price wrote. "That, however, was his way."

Then, as now, the masthead of *The Register-Guard's* editorial page declared that "A newspaper is a CITIZEN OF ITS COMMUNITY." It is possible, according to Professor Price's account, that Tugman initiated that motto. His editors and reporters knew he had another motto—a newspaper is the WATCHDOG for the community. During most of his years as editor *The Register-Guard* stood largely alone as watchdog and chronicler of the day's events. The community had no televi-

sion and only limited radio coverage of news events.

Thus *The Register-Guard* and its news staff were, in Tugman's mind, the great defender of the public's right to know. Woe to any of us who missed a public meeting or even dared to leave before the last curb cut was approved and the public body adjourned at midnight or later.

Tugman demanded that his reporters not only cover the news but also make sure nothing happened behind the public's back. After Tom Jaques' expulsion from the committee meeting, Tugman called us together. He reinvoked what he said was a long-standing *Register-Guard* policy. He said if any public body met behind closed doors again, we were to alert the city editor so a photographer could be dispatched. The photographer would take a picture of anyone entering or leaving the closed doors. The photos would be published the next day.

To my knowledge, none of us had occasion to call for a photographer after Tugman's edict, maybe because it became well known around the community.

To Tugman, the newspaper was a journal of public record. He expected each of us to prepare a "precede" of each meeting on his or her beat, listing in detail all items scheduled for discussion so that anyone affected by what was to be discussed could be present.

By Tugman's direction, the paper printed full court records in agate (small type). Before newsprint became scarce in World War II, it even listed the names of everyone paying 50-cent fines for parking meter violations.

Despite his partisan positions,



The Register-Guard newsroom circa 1954—about the end of the William Tugman era in Eugene. (Photos courtesy of The Register-Guard.)

Tugman made sure that opponents also had their say in the news columns. He insisted that reporters seek a reply from anyone who was being charged of bad conduct by someone else. He instituted the policy of giving space to “pro” and “con” sides of an issue before an election, a practice still followed for major issues.

Tugman maintained a long-lasting relationship with the late Senator Wayne Morse. Their relationship

started amicably enough. Morse was dean of the law school at the University of Oregon. He and Tugman were outspoken allies in the successful campaign to save the university from the infamous Zorn-McPherson Plan.

Later, when Morse served in the U.S. Senate, Tugman’s editorials and Morse’s political acumen served to bring about the system of flood control dams on the Willamette and McKenzie Rivers. Before the dams were constructed,

winter floods were almost an annual event, especially in East Springfield, the Glenwood area, and River Road.

Equally troublesome was Amazon Creek, which flows through Eugene to Fern Ridge Reservoir. Before workers dredged the channel and lined portions with concrete, rising waters almost annually flooded the area where South Eugene High School now stands. Sections of both east and west 18th Avenue frequently ran with water from curb to curb.

Tugman plugged away for the Amazon Channel improvement and also served as leader in the campaign to acquire the land for Amazon Park among countless other civic betterment projects. He'd scoff with disgust, I'm sure, if he knew of a movement today to restore Amazon Creek to its "natural flow."

Tugman's once-cordial friendship with Senator Morse worsened over the years. The animosity apparently began when Morse criticized press coverage of a national steel strike in 1952. Tugman responded with an editorial declaring that Morse's criticism of the press "is the silliest thing he has ever done, and that's a large statement." Tugman added that Morse would be a more valuable senator "if he would think more and talk less."

Morse fired back a response accusing the editor of "personal malice" and suggesting that "in view of the bitterness of your editorial attack on this controversy, I think it best that we just agree to disagree." There was no thaw in the relationship between the senator and the paper, even after Tugman's departure in 1954.

Tugman's editorial priorities also

focused on county roads and state highways. Shortly after I joined the news staff in 1948, he began feuding with the Lane County commissioners over what he considered a harebrained roads program.

One commissioner had the idea that putting all the county's road funds into concrete paving would eventually bring about a permanent road system. The fund was adequate for about five miles of two-lane concrete paving each year. One of the first concrete paving projects was for a road past the commissioner's property. Meanwhile, maintenance of existing roads throughout the county was being neglected. Tugman began dispatching a photographer to take photos of the worst potholes.

About this time a subordinate editor called in the news staff to cover a flood that was worsening by the hour. I was taking calls on the phone. One of the callers was Tugman.

"I want you to get a photographer out to that new concrete road," he said. "I'm told it's acting like a dike. Fields are flooding."

"Mr. Tugman," I said, "half of East Springfield is under water. The McKenzie and Willamette Rivers are both over their banks."

"Well, just the same, you get a photographer out there," he said. "That concrete road is acting just like a dam."

As it turned out, the rising waters had cut off Springfield from Eugene by then, so a photographer couldn't get there.

Some of Tugman's crusades became personal vendettas, it seemed to us. Jaques remembers when Tugman was upset because Calvin Crumbaker, the city council president, installed an as-

phalt-paved sidewalk in front of his business college on East 11th Avenue.

"Tugman told me to go over to city hall and search the records to see if Crumbaker had permission to substitute asphalt for cement," Jaques said. That was on the day before Christmas.

"Offices were closing early, but the city manager's secretary had to wait while I went through the city council minutes," he said. "I couldn't find any reference to Crumbaker's sidewalk, and I finally went back to the office scared to death about what Tugman would say. "It turned out that he'd left the office for home about 2 p.m." Tugman never mentioned the sidewalk again.

If Tugman was tough at times on elected officials, he could also be supportive when he believed the cause was correct. Tugman had studied municipal government at Harvard so he was probably better informed on governmental affairs than many of the local officials.

Tugman succeeded in promoting the city manager form of government for Eugene, but failed in a long-standing attempt to achieve a county manager system. After he left the paper, however, county government was reorganized to eliminate much of its partisan politics. Under the new system, similar to some of Tugman's ideas, such professional positions as sheriff, treasurer, and recorder are no longer elected.

The Register-Guard's news coverage was simpler and more direct in the Tugman era. Reporters called almost daily on department heads at city hall and the courthouse to see what was happening. There were no public relations folks to filter the news.

After I became the city hall reporter, I'd stop each morning at the office of the city manager, Robert Finlayson. At the time the city's private bus line was in financial trouble. Buses were running infrequently or not at all.

"What are you going to do about it?" I asked Finlayson.

"Well," he said, "I'm checking around to find cities that have good, sound bus systems up and running."

"Oh, then you'll see how they do it?" I inquired, sensing a possible news story here.

"No," he told me, "I'll apply for a job there."

Finlayson could joke a lot. He could also be agonizingly evasive. I envied Wendy Ray of station KUGN who'd come in, hold a tape recorder up to Finlayson and get a concise 30-second answer to a question that Finlayson had been kicking around for five minutes with me. There was nothing like knowing he was being quoted on radio to help him focus his answers.

Whatever the problems with sources, Tugman wanted his reporters to keep in touch with the news makers. He did the same. He met almost every noon with a group of civic leaders to kick around city problems. Parks became special with him; he worked closely with Tex Matsler, Eugene's parks and recreation director, to acquire land for city parks.

They say everybody called him "Bill." Professor Price repeated that in his history of the paper. I could never be that familiar. He was always "Mr. Tugman" to me. I think most of the news staff also stood in awe of him. His eyebrows could arch quizzically if your copy raised doubts in his mind.

During my first week of work, I was coming up the stairway when Tugman was coming down.

"Good morning," I said. Tugman stared through me and said nothing.

I told Bob Frazier, then city editor, that I feared Tugman didn't like me because he hadn't returned my greeting.

"Oh, no," Frazier said. "He was just composing an editorial in his mind. He blocks out everything when he's doing that."

Tugman was not what you'd call a neat dresser. His attire was usually somewhat rumpled. A newsroom story that may or may not be true told of Tugman's first days at the *Eugene Guard* in 1927.

Alton Baker, the publisher, complained to Tugman about his appearance.

"Bill, you're an editor now," Baker supposedly said. "You need to look the part. You ought to be wearing a better suit and a tie."

Tugman walked across the street from the newspaper's office, then at 1037 Willamette Street, to Baxter and Henning's men's wear. He selected two suits—and charged them to the *Guard*.

Although Tugman received praise for his civic accomplishments, his strong stance was possible only because publisher Alton Baker Sr. gave him a free hand to determine editorial policy. Baker himself participated in many improvement projects, working behind the scenes or lending financial support to parks and the Willamette Greenway project, for example.

Many of us in the newsroom found it sad that Tugman left *The Register-*

Guard in 1954 in less-than-happy circumstances. He said he was purchasing the *Port Umpqua Courier* in Reedsport to slow his pace of activities. Few of us believed that the hectic job of putting out a weekly newspaper virtually alone was any way to taper off. A new generation of Bakers began to assume management of the paper. Tugman felt it was time to move on. He edited and published the *Port Umpqua Courier* until his health worsened. He died of a heart attack May 9, 1961. He was 67.

Honors for his civic endeavors soon followed. Two parks were named for him, one in Eugene, another on the coast. Last year he was accepted into the Oregon Newspaper Hall of Fame.

"Mr. Tugman was a major force in shaping the future of the Eugene-Springfield area and Lane County as a whole," the hall of fame nomination read. "He worked diligently, editorially and personally, to protect the rights of all citizens and to see that governing officials were held accountable for their actions. . . . One of his strongest roles was that of watchdog over land-use zoning and development issues during a time of extremely rapid growth in the community. . . ."

Those of us who worked on his staff remember Tugman as a warm human interested in what we did. Staff parties at his house were happy events where the talk ranged from community issues to the way our host might be seasoning a chicken he was stewing on the kitchen range that night. Most of us went to work for *The Register-Guard* just out of journalism school. It was great to have someone like Mr. Tugman to get us started on our careers.

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Step One: Write a check for \$10 made out to the Lane County Historical Society.

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