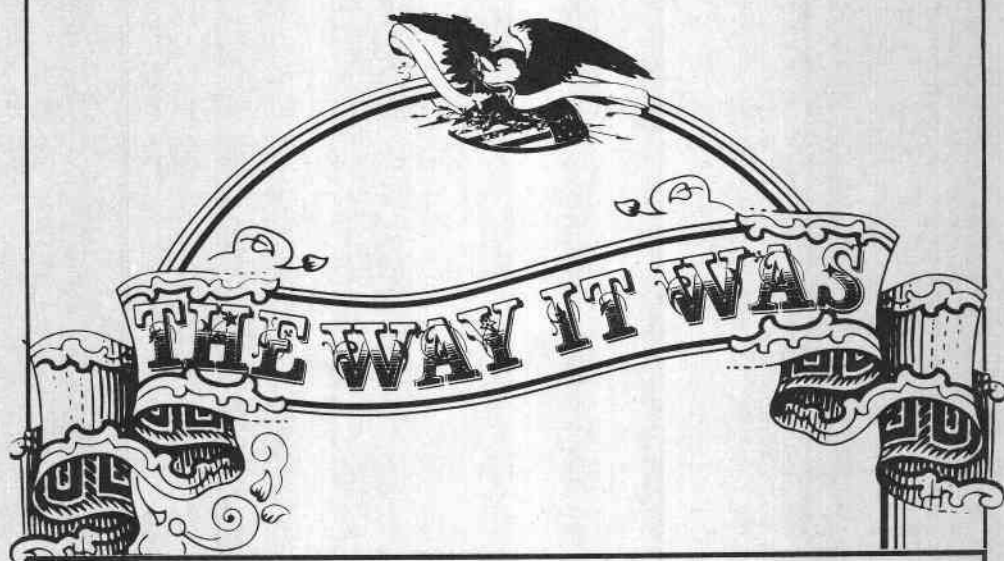


Lane County Historian



Kitson Hot Mineral Springs. Helen Huntington Collection, Lane County Historical Museum photo.

The Lane County Historical Society
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The Lane County Historical Society

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Correction to Vol. VI, No. 2, page 24.

“...The 63rd listing of first one hundred marriages should read Joseph
McLean and Margaret Rebecca Davidson — not M. LANE.”

—Margaret Hayfield, Portland, OR

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"ANOTHER SELF REMEMBERS. . ."

By Helen McAlister Huntington

Compiled and edited by Marty West

Helen Huntington pleasantly recalls the summers spent at Kitson Springs. From hand-written and typed drafts, marginal notes and outlines, we read her description of childhood memories with three brothers and sister and Grandmother Warfield at the "springg" from about 1915. Helen's family recently donated the original manuscript materials from which these quotes are taken, to the Lane County Historical Museum Library so that her dream of sharing her recollections might be realized.

"Another self remembers what

the world was like

*When I was less than half my
height*

*And saw the tiny things
Set in the covering of earth:
Small flowers, and dew
sparkling in the morning
light*

*Spider babies swinging on their
threads;*

*Mushroom circles where the
fairies dance,*

*And every path ran to some
magic end."*

"The best part of being at the springs was the stillness and the marvelous air. People used to come to drink the spring water and soak in it too. These were the older people who were steady patrons coming back year after year. Some could not bring themselves to drink the water. It did have a very distinctive odor of sulphur about it. The water had so many minerals in it

that one couldn't use soap with it. From time to time some unfortunate woman would disbelieve the prohibition and rub soap into her hair. It was very difficult to rinse out. I believe the usual treatment was vinegar.

"A good many people found that visiting the springs did relieve their rheumatism, as it was called in those days. We even had one case of x-ray burn that had been very difficult to heal until the patient bathed in the spring water. It happened sometimes that people would come up in wheel-chairs and be able to walk when they left. Perhaps the peaceful atmosphere, away from all their problems, helped."

Kitson Springs is located on Hills Creek about eight miles beyond Oakridge on Kitson Springs Road (T22S/R4E/S6). David Kitson had arrived in Oregon Territory before Oregon became a state. Indians had told him of a place containing medicine water, and they directed him to the area now known as Kitson Springs. He bought the springs from the Indians and a later land grant gave him three quarter sections where he developed a summer resort that consisted of a hotel and bathhouse.

David's own cabin, made of hand-hewn logs, had a front porch leading into a combination sleeping and front room with a natural stone fireplace and a tiny kitchen. Hill's Creek ran through the middle of the property. Helen refers to the creek by an earlier

name of Kitson Creek and says,

"The creek was very beautiful. It ran through a mountainous, timbered area. Along the banks there were salal, huckleberries, ferns of several kinds, mushrooms, swamp grass, lady slippers, trillium, seafoam, tiger lilies, wild rose, yellow and blue violets and many more. There were a number of small creeks that emptied into Kitson Creek. Some people didn't enjoy the sound of the creek. They were used to city noises. There were many large rocks in the creek — some had small shrubs growing on them. The rushing water swirled around them with just a trace of foam at its edge. The deep water was always dark, sometimes greenish depending on the position of

the sun. I especially liked the places where the water was not so deep and foam-tipped riffles seemed to be trying to head back upstream. Some people think they look[ed] like white horses."

About 1905 Kitson put an ad in the Portland **Oregonian** to sell the place, but refused to sell to "men in store-bought clothes and women with damn fool dogs". John Warfield had become buddies with Kitson and he heard the place was for sale, and being neither of the above, bought the place from Kitson.

"John Hollister Warfield and his wife Bethenia Brent Warfield first went to Kitson Springs by horse and buggy. They were looking for a place to invest in. At that time, David Kitson



Mary Elizabeth Warfield McAlister, Bethenia Brent Warfield with glasses, Helen Huntington with big ribbon, Great Grandmother with glasses, Aunt Harriet, her daughter with doll. Helen Huntington collection, Lane County Historical Museum photo.

had become tired of his isolation — and also of being stalked by cougars when he went out to hunt deer. His cabin was uphill from the bathhouse on the way to a 'deer lick' (a marshy ground where the deer came for salt). There were also wolf packs on a wooded hill across the creek. They could be heard even on the other side of Kitson Creek. Also, there was a rocky road — eight miles long — to get to the nearest town."

The Warfields lived in the Eugene area with their children George, Harriet and Mary. Leaving the children in Eugene they moved up to the springs and started to enlarge the area by constructing cabins of one room for individuals and two or three rooms for family rental. They continued to operate and improve the Kitson Hot Springs as a resort area offering camping facilities, a hotel with cooked meals, stable accommodations and use of the famous therapeutic hot springs for baths. Guests arrived from many other areas of the state, as well as Lane County, and were often referred by doctors who felt their patients would benefit from the medicinal qualities of the baths.

In 1910 John Warfield died, leaving the resort to his wife, who continued the operation.

Entries in a day book kept at the springs from 1909 to 1915 in the Museum Library's collection show that daily trips to the "ridge" (Oakridge) were made to pick up mail, get additional groceries for themselves and for campers who purchased from them, and to get resort guests who debarked on the

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train from Eugene. As the road was deeply rutted, a wagon and two-horse team were required to make the four hour round trip.

Helen recalls, "*In the early days, it took most of a day by wagon from Eugene to the springs. We children rode in back of the wagon and had been thoughtfully provided with brimmed hats for the journey. We enjoyed the first part of the ride (though it was jolting) because of the novelty. Later we were given oranges to peel and eat. We gradually tired of the constant motion. It wasn't really possible to sleep, but we did curl up on the floor propped in place by each other. How happy we were when we reached Oakridge. A short time after we were in the woods and the horses were washing through a shallow stream which crossed the road. They were allowed to stand in the water and drink. About three miles from the springs there was another drinking place at Fred Fisk's² place. There was a pool about three or four feet above the road level where the horses could be watered. They were hot and dusty as the road was getting steep. Eventually we clattered across the bridge that led into Grandmother's place. We were too small to help so we dashed into the welcome shade inside the lodge.*

"In later years the family went by train, the train going to Oakridge left from Springfield. I remember the red plush seats and especially the tunnels. The conductor used to light lamps of some sort shortly before we reached them. There were many curious smells about the train. The most noticeable was the coal smoke that seeped in appreciably while we were in the

longest tunnel. One could get drinks of water in small paper cups.

"By the time we reached Oakridge we were apt to be quite bored and slightly grimy [sic]. The stop that was made to fill the water tank on the train took some time as did whatever switching of cars was done at the 'stops' along the way. Upon arriving at the Oakridge station there was another tedious period of waiting for the baggage to be collected. The mail for the springs was picked up along with any shipments for the springs. Grandmother bought eggs by the case. She also kept a small store which provided the campers with housekeeping items and incidentals.

"Finally, we were wedged into whatever vehicle was available and began the last eight miles of our trip. Like a good deal of the roads in those days it was so narrow that cars could only pass in certain wider points. Sometimes one of the cars would stall on a hill and require strenuous pushing. Fortunately, most travelers were quite accustomed to providing assistance.

"The 'springs' were several in number. The hot mineral springs supplied the bathhouse — a wooden structure which had a number of specially built wooden tubs. Some of the tubs were porcelain, but the wooden tubs were more popular. They were large enough so that the water came up quite high and stayed warm much longer than in the white tubs.

"The water from the spring had been raised by being enclosed in a cement structure and the flow was carried in wooden pipes to a wooden tank in the middle of the bathhouse — the overflow running out the end of the

bathhouse into Kitson Creek.

"Metal could not be used for pipes so there couldn't be any faucets, of course, so there were wooden spigots with a wooden pump handle sort of arrangement that enabled the bather to turn the water on and off.³ Some children and even some older people had to have cold water mixed in. Fortunately there was a cold water spring just a few feet from the hot springs. For elderly people there was a knotted rope hung just above the tub so that the patient could be helped out of the tub.

"Another of the springs was at the bottom of the creek, upstream from the bathhouse. There was also a cold mineral spring near a swampy section which was called the 'deer lick'. There were many deer in the area. They were given to feeding with the livestock during the winter snows. Another fresh water spring was near the bathhouse and one was handy to the wash house. Grandmother used to put bluing in this one . . . That was back in the olden times when people believed that streams cleaned themselves as they flowed along. It was a pretty sight to see a dozen or so sheets sparkling in the sunshine.

"... There used to be an enameled dipper with a long handle fastened to the wooden frame around the spring. Another feature of the early bathhouse was natural ventilation occurring from the unfinished areas between the walls and roof. This did allow some of the steam to escape — however, it also resulted in intermittent cold showers from the condensation! Of course there was no particular limit to the amount of water bathers could use. Some used

to stay in the tub for lengthy periods, replacing the water as it cooled. It was hot enough to alarm children. I remember we used to carry water from the cold water spring outside the bathhouse to temper the heat for my younger sister and brother.

"Grandmother was a very vigorous woman and relied considerably on lye as a cleaning agent, especially for the tubs. It was impossible to keep the floors dry, so wooden racks were part of the furnishings. Otherwise, there was a wooden bench, some pegs to hang things on, and in some instances a lamp bracket. I still remember polishing lamp chimneys. Mr. C (Castle, the handyman and caretaker) usually filled the lamps. He also pumped up the Coleman lamps when those replaced the kerosene ones.

"Out of season my three brothers used to take their baths at the same time while singing and yodeling loudly uninhibitedly so that we could hear them up at the lodge. Unfortunately, there was no inside plumbing at that time. In case anyone of today's generation would like to know, tending outhouses is a constant job and moving them required a great deal of back-breaking labor. Montgomery Ward catalogues really were the usual paper supply.

"The walls of the spring were covered with dark green algae that looked somewhat like seaweed. It was fastened to the walls of the spring but the large pieces broke off. It didn't look particularly appetizing. Periodically the water had to be 'let out' of the springs and the sides scraped.

"Some interest was expressed in this

algae by students/teachers at the university as it was not common to find this kind of vegetation in water of this temperature. There was also some interest in the supposed fact that one of the guests who had a burn from x-ray had been healed by using the spring water. As a matter of fact, a good many people who suffered from various forms of rheumatism (arthritis) were considerably improved after soaking in the hot water. They were also encouraged to drink it. It certainly should be possible that the combination of being on a holiday, drinking more water than usual and taking hot baths did relieve their symptoms. At least they believed in it enough to come back from summer to summer."

Interspersed throughout Helen's numerous drafts detailing and describing the structures and furnishings of the lodge and cabins, are loving comments about Grandmother Warfield.

"Grandmother had beautiful white hair and a skin like a young child even during her sixties . . . possibly because she drank a whole pint of 'spring' water every mornings. She was always light footed too in spite of her ample weight, and very active. I remember her sitting in her special rocking chair in the afternoons tatting lace edgings of all sorts and colors, from large for towel edging to tiny for baby clothes. She used to knit mittens and socks for her grandchildren. In the summer she liked to have her palm leaf fan in reach. She often played hymns on her organ, moderately most of the time. When she was worried or

upset the chords would thunder out remarkably . . . Grandmother at one time, when she was younger, had taught in a school for young ladies.

"During the time I remember her she wore mostly black as she was a widow . . . She always wore a large white apron when she was in the house. They were made of unbleached muslin and were hard to iron.

"Grandmother tried raising ducks, chickens, bees, goats and a cow. The cow was a large, red brindled specimen with only one horn. She preferred to be milked by a woman. Grandmother also kept a vegetable garden and had a hot-bed for the young plants. Besides canning and preserving, Grandmother used to make her own soap. At one time she also made cheese. I remember seeing wrapped chunks of it curing in one of the upstairs rooms."

Helen's recollections provide us with a glimpse of a bygone era of summer recreation. It would seem that Grandmother Warfield's work never ended, but her genuine hospitality and bountiful table brought guests back summer after summer. Helen describes the comfortable home-made, hand crafted, scrupulously clean and well organized lodge and the rustic simplicity of the cabins.

"The interior of the lodge that Grandmother had built was rough wood: the outside was wood shingles and shakes on the roof. The kitchen and dining room had large windows in the front end. The kitchen had large sliding windows over the enormous kitchen sink. The windows on the side

of the dining room were small paned and looked out on a huge rock which was covered with the large blackberry vine. Close by was the root house where Grandmother kept some of the vegetables.

"... on one wall [of the pantry] there was a large three compartment bin for the various kinds of flour and a bread board was set into the top of this. Two walls were lined with shelves . . . for the pots, pans, and two very large bowls in which to make bread. Against the wall next to the pantry door was a pie safe or cooler. In this Grandmother always kept two large enameled pitchers filled with sourdough pancake batter.

"The only furniture in the kitchen was a large table covered with oilcloth, and an old ship's range. There were two ovens in which six loaves each could be baked. Pancakes were cooked directly on the top and there was a metal trough under the cooking surface with a tin can at one end to catch the grease. There was also a wooden hood over the stove to carry away the cooking odors. One wall of the kitchen opposite the stove was composed of cupboards on top and drawers underneath combined with a pass through into the dining room.

"This room . . . was long and rather narrow. A table made of two large, heavy planks of dark varnished wood was the main piece of furniture. My father built this table and four chairs in the Roycroft style.⁴ The table could and often did seat twelve or fourteen. The chairs were large enough so that two children might have been able to sit on one chair. They were sturdy

enough so that we used two of them to set the big ironing board on on ironing days.

"... There was a gray stone fireplace. In summer it was seldom used. The only telephone was in the dining room ... and was definitely a party line. In heavily wooded locations such as the springs, the phone lines were allowed enough slack so that a falling snag would not ordinarily disrupt the service.

"There were two window walls in the front room. Since they were uncurtained, the trees and mountains were always in view. There was a desk at the far end of this room where Grandmother's accounts were kept by Mr. Castle. There were also shelves along the wall for books and Grandmother's organ. On the other side of the door to the dining room, a rather large mirror was hung with a fair-

sized comb that was used by the visitors. There was an assortment of easy chairs, and a small table for the lamp ... there was no electricity at that time. We used kerosene lamps. There were lamp brackets on the walls in the halls to the bedrooms. When we children needed a light, we were given candles in black enameled holders.

"... there were four bedrooms on the first floor plus a large closet lined with deep shelves for the bedding and pillows. The door at the far end of the hall opened onto the porch. Most of the floors in the lodge were bare except for the hooked rugs that we made ourselves. The stairs were covered with a rag carpet ... designed to be easy to walk up and down and a hand rail all the way.

"Upstairs there were eight or nine bedrooms. Grandmother's was quite large and had windows on two sides



Richard D. Castle with hat is gardener and yards. Also brings in loads of cut logs and keeps the two fireplaces in the chilly weather. Mary Elizabeth Warfield McAlister has five children, Robert and Kenner, Helen (with my young son) Doris. Helen Huntington Collection. Lane County Historical Museum photo.

and a closet that was as wide as the room. For many years the climbing roses at the front of the lodge bloomed at the second story level. I can remember seeing Grandmother's pillows airing on the window ledge with the sun shining in and the sound of the creek.

"It used to be called Warfield Creek after my Grandmother or Kitson Creek and finally Hills Creek, which it is today. There was a balcony at the other end of the upstairs hall where we could see the road into the springs for a short way . . .

"There was no plumbing in the lodge except for the big wooden kitchen sink. There was a large outhouse not far from the back porch of the lodge. After dark one would have to carry a candle or a lamp. There were pitchers and washbowls in the bedrooms, not to mention chamber pots. There were lamp brackets in the upstairs and downstairs hall. It was quite a job to keep all the lamps for the house filled and the lamp chimneys polished. Besides the lamp bracket in the kitchen, there was a salt container in blue and white Delft on the wall and a small set of shelves where the matches were kept. On the wall next to the pantry door there hung two aluminum dishpans.

"The porch went around three sides of the house. Near the side door, to the front room, there hung a large wood swing which was a favorite place for people to sit down when the weather was nice or the mail was expected.

"Grandmother had stacks of dishes, kettles, silverware, glasses, pitchers, platters and serving bowls. There was

also a milk-glass bread plate which had "Give Us This Day" on one edge and "Our Daily Bread" on the other. Grandmother made her own bread, of course. She used water from the mineral spring to start the bread, and put ginger and hops in along with the yeast. I also remember a large, heavy pitcher that was embellished with a raised design of an Indian Chief in dark blue. Meals were served family style, except that Grandmother kept the food circulating by going around the table urging the guests to take second helpings.

"The table runners had to be thoroughly sprinkled before [they] could be properly ironed — what with keeping the fire up enough to heat the heavy flat irons and the interminable length of these clothes 'doing the flat work' was not a favorite chore. Grandmother was very scrupulous about scalding the dishes. Also, when she found a cracked dish or cup she finished breaking it and it was discarded. This bit about bashing the china on the edge of the wooden sink was an impressive sight to me. I began dishwashing at an early age and in the process developed the feeling that breaking dishes was taboo. Not so to Grandmother. She seemed to get as much satisfaction in that as I did from throwing leftovers before they spoiled. I have never believed that food which was saved to the bitter end would somehow benefit hungry people on the other side of the earth.

"For breakfasts, Grandmother served cooked cereal with cream, bacon, eggs, toast, pancakes, fruit and potatoes. There was usually a choice

of preserves for the toast besides the syrup or honey for the pancakes. Sometimes, in the fall, there would be venison steaks for breakfast. Grandmother was a talented cook. She had to can some meat for use during the winter months since there was no way of keeping fresh meat. We also ate bear meat, and during the fishing season had fresh brook trout. Grandmother also liked to get a crock or barrel of salted smelt when they were available. I like the creamed codfish and could never understand why it wasn't well received by everyone. For Mr. C she fixed his favorite, which was smoked salt mackerel.

"Lunch and dinner during the summer were both hearty meals. There might be fewer guests for lunch, which sometimes meant that sack lunches must be prepared for the fishermen. On Sunday evening, after the season was over, Grandmother used to cook supper in the fireplace so as to not heat up the big range at the end of the day. She had a black iron kettle which could be set among the coals. We children used to sit on footstools for this. I remember one had a covering of deerhide with the hair still on it.

"Getting fresh milk was a problem. Our nearest neighbors kept cows. They were willing to sell us milk but it meant about a three-mile walk. I remember taking my younger brother and sister along one time. We saw the tracks of one large and two small bears on the way down. On the way back, we heard a loud, coughing sound in the woods near the road. I was petrified for a minute — then grabbing a child by each hand, I ran back to the neighbors. They were not much im-

pressed with the bear story, but he was kind enough to walk us past the point we heard the noise.

"The early cabins were quite simply built of rough boards . . . and furnished with a wood cook stove and a bed and table and benches. There was no plumbing of any sort. Since these cabins were near the creek, the campers could get their own water.

"They also could keep perishable foods cool by setting them into the edge of the creek. Some of the cabins had screened food cupboards. Those who lived in the cabins had to climb up and down steep trails to get to the creek. In those days this was not considered a hardship . . .

"The later cabins were built on the lodge side of the creek. The architecture was various as Grandmother often allowed people to stay in the cabins in exchange for their labor. Some of them were carpenters and had somewhat of a free hand in their work. By the time these cabins were built, a gravity flow water system brought water both to the lodge and to the area of the cabins. Not a faucet in each cabin but at intervals in the ground near the cabins. One cabin was at the top of a hill just across the road from the bathhouse. There was a small creek running down the same hill. In the summer the guests at this cabin could get really cold water to drink from this creek. The gravity flow system was mostly above ground as the spring that supplied its water was in an area of more rocks than earth. This meant that the water might be tepid by the time it reached the faucets in camp.

"Mr. Castle kept up an attractive

small lawn on the creek side of the lodge. He also had a bed of flowers across the road from the front porch of the house . . . His dahlias grew to shoulder height and the colors were gorgeous. Grandmother had a cold frame on the hill across the road from the kitchen end of the porch. She kept trying to raise fresh vegetables. The soil was not bad — what there was of it — but the insects were numerous and active. Also the weather was difficult — very hot, short days and chilly nights.”

It was not all work and no play for Helen and her sister and brothers. Rather, the lazy days of summer provided endless activities for the innovative minds of the children in this natural setting of the forest.

“ . . . we used to pick the rose hips and make tea sets by taking the seeds out as carefully as possible. We also tried to make perfume from the fir needles and flowers . . . and tried to build lean-tos. On rainy days we played checkers or cards. Sometimes we could play the organ or listen to Grandmother’s records. One record was a post-Civil War production and seemed to arouse mixed emotions in the various audiences.

“There was a tiny room at the end of the upstairs hall next to the fireplace chimney that made an exceptionally good retreat. Also, the loft over the root-house was stacked with old magazines, most of them very old . . . When we had been unusually noisy, we were sometimes allowed to play in one of the unoccupied cabins.

“ . . . my older brother could from time to time be prevailed upon to make fudge for us . . . It was a different

thing making candy on an old ship’s range without a thermometer. Also the fire had to be kept up, which meant that the wood box would have to be filled again. There used to be a pile of bark near the woodshed — the pieces were so thick and damp that they burned quite steadily once they ignited. There was usually a whole shed full of chopped wood and smaller amounts of kindling in the wood shed, besides quarter logs in four foot lengths for the two fireplaces. Pitchy pieces were a help in getting the big range off to a good start in the mornings.

“As children, some of us didn’t whole-heartedly enjoy the family hikes up and down the creek. This was in part because of having to cross the creek on logs. To us the danger was as great as if we had been asked to ford the Grand Canyon without a handhold. The bark on the trees was often loose, you realize, and the creek bed rocky. I, at least, was also a menace on fishing trips. I almost invariably fell in. What we all enjoyed was playing on the edge of the creek where we could collect colored rocks, build little dams, and catch crayfish. We also tried to catch minnows but were not successful. What our parents seemed to enjoy was going a little further up the creek by themselves to rest in the shade with only the surging of the creek for noise. That was where they were the day my sister got too close to the edge while watching one of the residents fish. He could not swim, so the boys dashed off after the folks while I jumped up and down screaming and suggesting furiously to the poor fisherman that he jump in. He finally did, so my dad had

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to help him to the bank as well as rescue Doris. As I remember, he wasn't too thrilled (from his looks) at having to jump in fully clothed. At any rate, Doris was plucky enough to keep paddling even though she couldn't swim.

"One summer she invited two other sets of grandchildren to visit while we were there. The big attic over the kitchen was divided into two sections by a curtain and all of us slept there. It was called the incubator. We must have been a trial to the gardener. He was a dedicated rose and dahlia grower and hated having his beds stepped in and his tools disarranged. Fortunately, our mothers were not exactly permissive. Mr. C [Castle] became very fond of my youngest brother and was as bereft as the rest of us when he died in an accident. I remember he once told me (on seeing me leap and touch the top of the door frame on going through) that I wouldn't always be doing that. He was right, too."

When Grandmother Warfield died the property was divided among her children. Later Mary sold the resort to her son-in-law, Ed Huntington, Sr., Helen's husband. In 1948 he capped the springs that were enclosed in rock, built a new bathhouse over them, and leased the area to William Cash for operation. New county sanitation requirements closed the resort to the public in 1963.

Helen became owner of the property after her husband's death and later sold it to her step-son, Ed Huntington, Jr. In 1977 Huntington and Don Beckman, partners in the B and H Forest Products Co., donated the 160

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acres of forest land that included bathhouse, auxiliary buildings and a swimming pool to the Oregon Trail Council of Boy Scouts of America.

The entrance sign officially calls the area "Camp Huntington and Beckman Tree Farm", but it still generally known as Kitson Springs. Oregon Trail Council has developed the site for use in training, Scout retreats and short-term camping, and they have added a new water system and a new bridge. Current plans call for the addition of Adirondack shelters at the camping sites.

Archeological and geological surveys and studies have been made from time to time and many changes have occurred in the area over the decades — a fire road was cut along the creek bank that affected "the catch", according to the fishermen; blasting for the installation of the swimming pool affected the flow of the spring; the Shady Beach fire in 1988 encroached on one part of the property.

But many of Helen's recollections remain unchanged and are recognizable at the springs today. "*. . . mushroom circles and spider babies . . . red huckleberries and thimble berries all around . . . the walls of the creek hung with maidenhair fern . . . the wild strawberries in season and later on hazel nuts if the chipmunks left any. . .*;"

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Helen McAlister Huntington was the second of five children born to Arthur and Mary Warfield McAlister in 1909 in Eugene. Her father was a bookkeeper in the

business office at the University of Oregon and the family lived near 15th and University. After one year of study at the university with an interest in law and politics, she became the second wife of Edwin Huntington, Sr.

Members of her family describe her as gentle, restrained but comfortable, gracious to a fault, prim and proper yet relatively sophisticated, and always concerned for others around her. Her sister, Doris, recalls that she "mothered" her siblings and always had a clean handkerchief! She had an inquiring mind and her favorite things reflect a variety of interests — MacNeil Lehrer Report, Tschaikowsky and Agatha Christie novels. She loved peace and quiet. She read a lot, she wrote a lot, and all agreed that her writings reveal a lot about herself.

Helen Huntington died in 1988.

² According to *Who's Who in Oregon*, (1953) Fred Fisk was Lane County Sheriff (1903-09); cashier at the U.S. Bank (1909-12); owner of timber lands in Lane County (1912-20); State Senator (1933-38).

³ An original wooden tub with spigot from the old Kitson Springs Lodge can be seen on display at the Oakridge Museum.

⁴ Roycroft was an artistic community within East Aurora, N.Y. during the early twentieth century. It was recognized by its workshops, lectures by Elbert Hubbard, and an apprentice system. The American Arts and Crafts Movement is identified with Roycroft and its style would fit the rustic surroundings of the "springs".

⁵ Jerry Dempsey, Scout Executive for Oregon Trail Council, provided the current information about Kitson Springs. □



New Bathhouse at Kitson Springs, May 1988. West collection, Lane County Historical Museum photo.

PEPPERMINT — A CASH CROP

By Lois Barton

This report is based on conversations with the following people: Rodney and Jackie Chase, Jack Sandgathe, Morris Funke, C.E. (Jack) Horner, Marjorie Gossler, Jim Rear, Harry Harbert and Judy Gutoski.

Stan Bettis, in his book *Market Days*, p. 37, says, "The first mint roots arrived in Eugene in a cardboard box, tucked among the luggage of a new-comer named Oliver Harvey Todd. Todd, 65, had come to Eugene more or less to retire. But he'd raised mint — the oil of which was and is used in the manufacture of chewing gum, candy and medicine — in Michigan and Idaho and he was curious to see how it would do in Oregon.

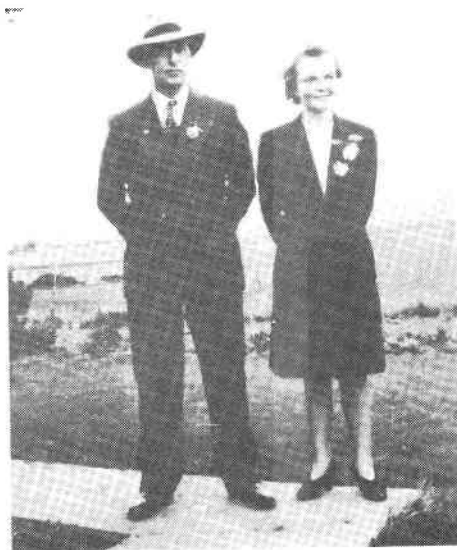
"He planted the roots on his property out near 25th and Willamette. They did well, so Todd sent for a barrel of roots from Michigan and planted those too. His next step was to build a peppermint oil distillery, a device of boilers and copper coils that made teetotaling Eugeneans wonder just what Mr. Todd was up to.

"They soon found out and so did farmers in the area, who recognized a cash crop when they saw one. By 1915 several hundred acres of choice bottom land in the upper valley was given over to sweetly scented mint, which was worth (in 1915) \$14 a pound."

Harry Harbert said Clyde Sidwell and Tom Green were early growers in the Coburg area. Morris Funke said Clyde bought oil from other local growers. Morris remembers when he was about ten years old (1930s) Clyde used to come around with his two

wheeled trailer behind his Buick to pick up their peppermint oil. Sometimes it was packaged in gallon jugs and was "just like money in the bank". Jack Sandgathe is quoted in an undated Springfield News article. "At one time in the '20s mint oil was so expensive that gallon jugs of the stuff were stored in bank vaults."

There were a number of distilleries, called stills, in Lane County early on; Clyde and Lee Sidwell, Green Brothers, Harbert and Funke's in the Coburg area. Fred Knox was reported to be operating a still in 1923. Rodney Chase mentioned stills in the Camp Creek area and Thurston. Jack



Leon & Flossie Funke, ca. 1940. "She often ran the still, worked hard at the mint growing" Morris Funke collection.

Sandgathe's father was raising mint in 1923. Jack built his first still on Old Mohawk Road in the '40s.

The boilers in those early stills are said to have often been from the steam donkey engines earlier used in logging operations. Mrs. Gossler said their second boiler was from a Georgia Pacific locomotive. The early boilers were fired with slab wood. As that fuel supply became scarce, people turned to natural gas.

The volatile oil is extracted from peppermint leaves by exposing them to steam, which vaporizes the oil. The vapor is run through a condenser, and the oil can then be separated from the water because the liquified oil floats on water. Morris Funke noted that there is a subtle difference in the

flavor and quality of the oil which depends on the soil it's grown in and the climate. Because the first oil in this country was produced in the Middle West, oil from there is rated first quality by consumers — that being what they were first accustomed to.

Culture and harvesting techniques have altered over the years. A field is tilled and planted with root stock and will produce a crop the first year. At least three to five crops can be harvested before the planting needs to be renewed.

The roots are often distributed, in this area, by an adapted manure spreader. Mrs. Gossler said the spreader has shovels attached which make trenches the roots fall into. Then the field is disked to cover them. Irrigation must be started in early summer and continued weekly until harvest. Judy Gutoski spoke of the time in Coburg Bottom Loop before irrigation was developed when the acreage yield would be 40 pounds or less. Much of the root stock for new plantings has come from southeast Washington. A video-tape produced by the Todd Company in Michigan points out that mint raising is capital intensive.

Both sheep and geese have been used in the past to control weeds in the growing crop. Again quoting the Springfield News article, "The bane of the mint grower . . . was weeds. At one time the farmer had to remove all weeds by hand and watch the field like a hawk. 'Weeds can really affect the quality of mint,' Sandgathe said.



Clyde and Pearl Green Sidwell, 50th Anniversary photo. "Pearl helped run the still." Courtesy Judy Gutoski.

'The discovery of Sinbar was a real boon to us.'

"In the mid-1960s Oregon State University scientists discovered Sinbar . . . a herbicide (which) killed most of the weeds . . . A study in the early 1970s showed the use of Sinbar produced an average saving of \$17 per acre, or about half a million dollars annually in Oregon.

"Sinbar is mainly responsible for the elimination of the use of geese in mint fields. . ."

In the early days the mint was mowed, dried and gathered much like hay — in long "straws". Judy Gotoski said in the very beginning growers used ordinary garden hoes, or scythes to cut it. It was raked into windrows, lifted onto wagon or truck with a pitchfork or a loader, and forked into steam vats where it must be trampled to pack it down. More recently, after drying, the plants are chopped into 1-3 inch segments for improved distillation. The chopper blows the mint into portable tubs which can be dumped mechanically. In a good year up to 80 pounds of mint oil per acre can be realized. One hazard to a full crop is freeze damage in years when snow is absent during sub-freezing temperatures.

Leon Funke, an early grower in the Coburg area, was quoted in the Register-Guard April 2, 1974. "Oregon's cloudy weather during spring and early summer results in yields of 65-75 pounds per acre. The same cloudy weather allows the plant to produce high quality oil." There were 6,300 acres of mint in Lane County in 1978. Willamette Valley

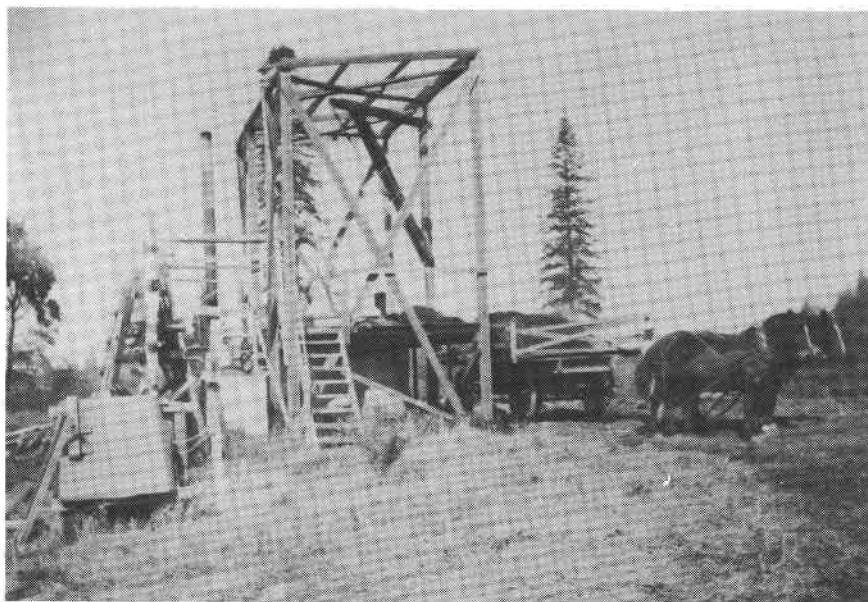
acreage that year was 29,700 acres, expected to produce more than \$28 million in farm income, among the state's top five crops. Leon Funke said in the same article that 50 years ago, "the tiny Lane County acreage had a combined output of less than five barrels." (400 pounds to the barrel.)

The quality of the mint oil declines as the blossoms open, so the best time to harvest is just as the blossoms appear. Over the years problems have developed. In the '50s rust became a serious handicap. A Register-Guard article September 5, 1954 — "This kind of rust is really a fungus . . . Attacking the green mint leaves it turns large portions of them into reddish brown blotches entirely devoid of oil." Expected yields of 60 pounds per acre were reduced to around 45 pounds. Rain that came during harvest aggravated the problem. Rust flourished while the mowed mint lay on the ground waiting to dry enough to be gathered.

An agricultural chemical called Phygon showed promise, but must be dusted on after every rain or irrigation. "Each time dusting carts are hauled through the fields, a certain amount of lush mint is crushed and killed."

The article continues: "This state is the nation's largest peppermint oil producer . . . The rust problem has caused sizeable reductions in acreage in both Oregon and Washington, the No. 2 peppermint oil state . . ."

Rodney Chase said rust problems drove him out of growing peppermint the first time. He spoke of the work done by C.E. (Jack) Horner, a plant



Leon Funke's first peppermint still. Morris Funke Collection.

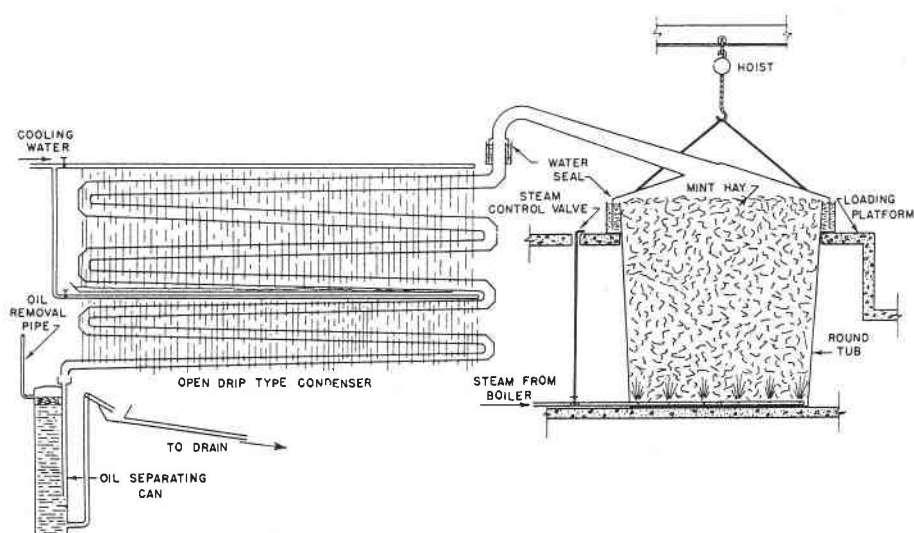


Figure 1. Field distillation unit with stationary tub and open drip-type condenser.

Still diagram from Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin #525, August, 1952.

pathologist at Oregon State University to help solve problems for mint farmers.

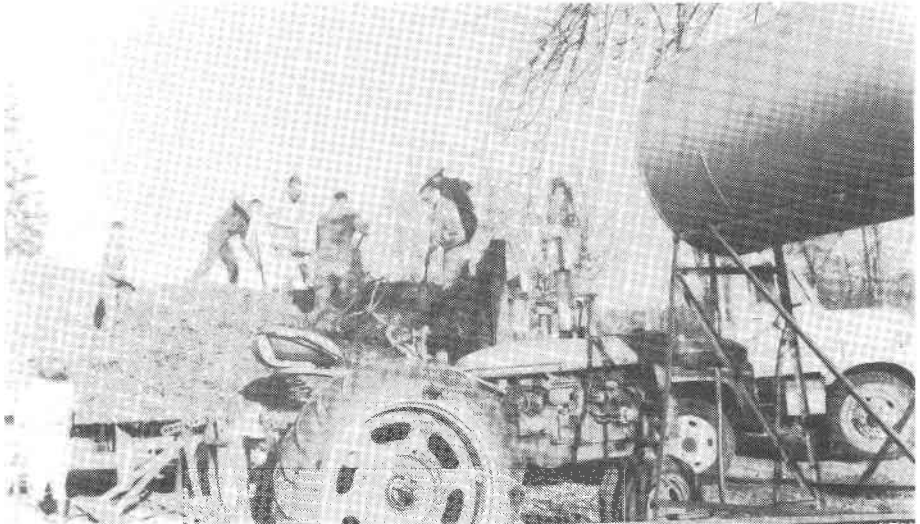
Another serious disease in mint fields has been "wilt", which was introduced into the area in 1951. This is dealt with by flaming the fields after harvest. Propane burners for this purpose were adapted by Rear Manufacturing Company on Prairie Road. Jim Rear said the adaptation largely amounted to what Rodney Chase asked him to do, and Rodney reported that Jack Horner perfected the burner for use in mint fields. The field must be irrigated after the flaming.

A publication entitled *Western Farmer*, put out by Western Liquid Gas Assoc. in February, 1967, says, "The flaming of mint to control wilt was started in some of the Oregon areas as early as 1958." A report of the results from one post-harvest flaming in September, 1975 in

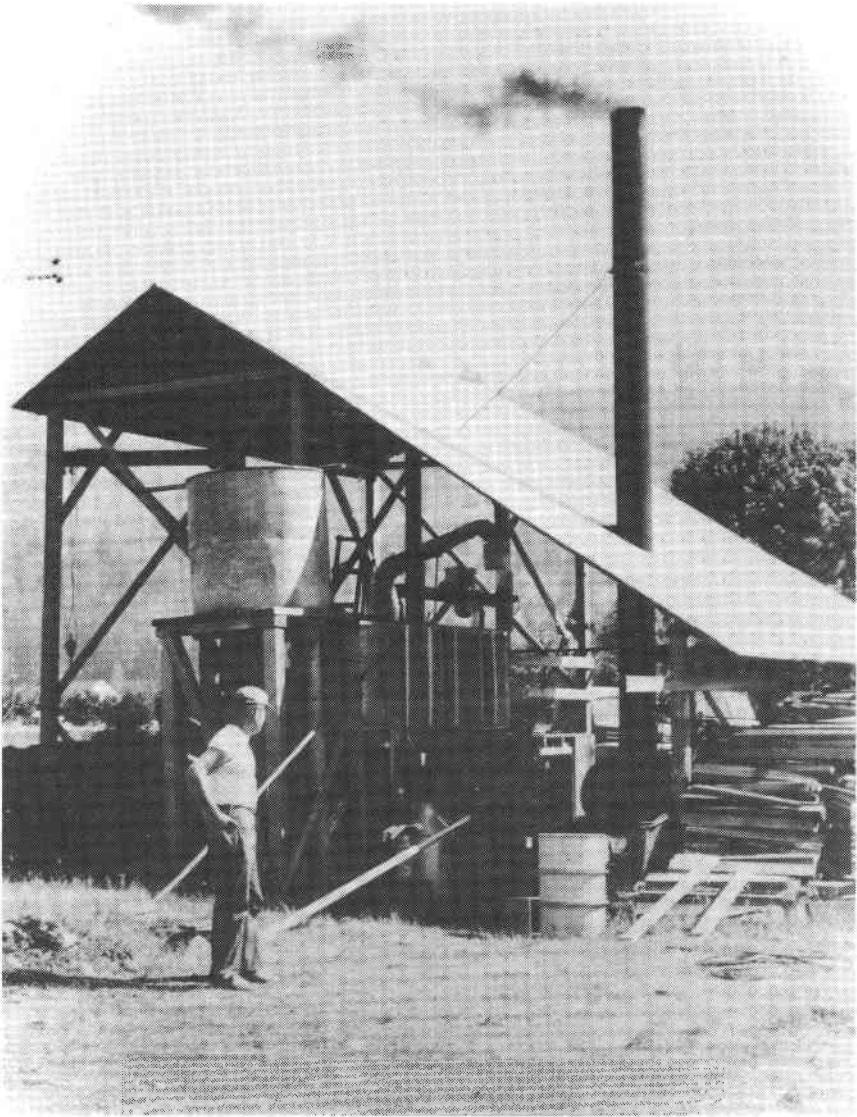
Rodney Chase's field shows reduction in wilt infestation of from 97.4% to 100%.

Early research in mint production was funded by the William Wrigley, Jr. Company of Chicago. An August, 1952 Extension Bulletin from Oregon State University describes work done by the Engineering and Agricultural Experiment stations to improve field distillation of peppermint oil. In 1949 there were about 100 mint growers in Oregon. A portable pilot distillation plant was built, designed to answer such questions as whether long or chopped hay gave the best yield, how wet hay can best be distilled, how long it should be cooked, what steam pressures or temperatures are best, how to prevent loss of oil in the separation process, etc.

Rodney Chase got started in mint growing as a high school student in the early '40s. His father "gave" him a field down by the river, "where they



Loading mint root. Courtesy Marjorie Gossler.



Lawrence Gossler Still, Sept., 1954. Register Guard photo, Courtesy Marjorie Gossler.

Mint Oil Bought

| 1935 | | | lbs. | A |
|------|----|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Feb | 8 | H. O. Paeschke | 64 | 2 00 |
| Aug. | 31 | T. L. Green | 53 | 1 50 |
| Sept | 2 | Green Bros. | 7 00 | 1 75 |
| " | 2 | Green Bros. | 29 | 1 50 |
| " | 2 | E. Sledge | 11 ¹ / ₄ | 1 45 |
| " | 2 | Civanovich | 10 | 1 50 |
| " | 11 | T. E. McClellan | 102 ¹ / ₄ | 1 50 |
| " | 12 | G. L. LeVee | 196 ³ / ₄ | 1 50 |
| " | 12 | T. L. Green | 189 | 1 37 ¹ / ₂ |
| " | 13 | Green Bros. | 4 00 | 1 50 |
| " | 13 | Green Bros. | 25 ³ / ₄ | 1 70 |
| " | 14 | Carl Surpensing | 261 ¹ / ₂ | 1 50 |
| " | 14 | Laurence Crabtree | 16 ¹ / ₂ | 1 50 |
| " | 14 | M. J. Chase | 7 ¹ / ₂ | 1 50 |
| " | 14 | A. W. Knox | 78 ³ / ₄ | 1 50 |
| " | 25 | Frank Parrish | 42 ¹ / ₂ | 1 20 |
| " | 16 | W. A. Cochran | 65 ³ / ₄ | 1 50 |
| " | 16 | W. M. Hillis | 48 ³ / ₄ | 1 50 |
| Oct. | 18 | P. L. Barber | 14 | 1 25 |
| " | 24 | W. A. Cochran | 601 ¹ / ₄ | 1 45 |
| " | 24 | W. T. Epperson | 74 ³ / ₄ | 1 45 |
| " | 24 | E. A. Beebe | 28 ¹ / ₄ | 1 45 |
| " | 25 | Leon Funke | 411 ³ / ₄ | 1 50 |
| " | 26 | Marion Smith | 94 ³ / ₄ | 1 75 |
| " | 26 | Chet Saylor | 100 | 1 45 |
| Nov | 1 | Leon Funke | 8 | 1 25 |
| " | 7 | J. C. Merritt | 93 | 1 25 |
| " | 8 | B. E. Gay | 14 | 1 25 |
| Dec | 19 | Ivan C. Pinkston | 314 ³ / ₄ | 1 47 |
| | | | 4054 ³ / ₄ | |

A page from Clyde Sidwell's financial journal. Courtesy Judy Gutoski.

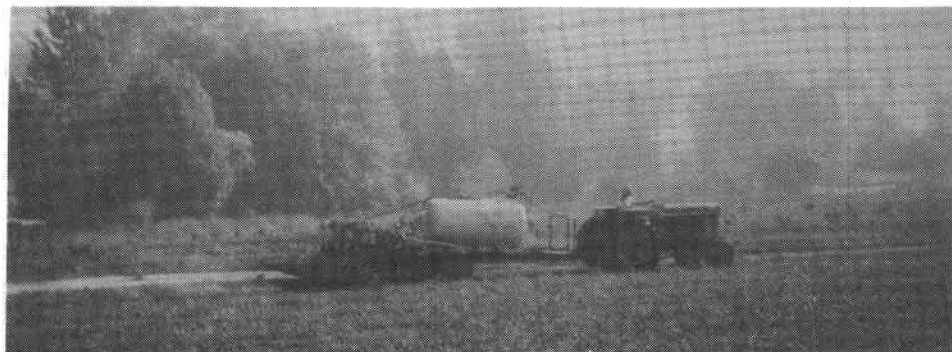


Distill crew in 1941, eating ice cream. l-r: Chuck Lovenburg, Hanry Smith, ?, Spike Zeitner, Leon Funke, ? Morris Funke collection.

could get a pump into the water." He made enough from that first crop to buy his first car.

Peppermint oil will keep for long periods. When the price is high more acres are planted, often resulting in a surfeit. The price can fluctuate from \$2.75 to \$20 or even \$30 per pound. Jack Sandgathe, in the Springfield

News article said, "The public generally believes that the mint producer is floating in money, mainly because of what looks to be an astronomical return for a fifty-five gallon can. Despite the figures, the profit margin is small and getting smaller as production costs rise."



Flamer at work in Chase mint field. Courtesy Rodney Chase.

INDIAN PUPPIES

By Manena Schwering as told to Ray Nash

When I was a very, very young child my mother and father were operating a hotel in Blue River, mostly for the benefit of miners and people who worked at the Blue River mines. The hotel in 1909 kept my parents very busy, so at age four I spent a great deal of time with my grandparents, Samuel and Robenia Sparks, who lived in their old log homestead house about a half mile west of the community of Blue River. I think they enjoyed having me as much as I enjoyed being with them.

During the early part of the century there were a great many Indians who made the trip from the Warm Springs Indian Reservation crossing the McKenzie Pass, coming over to fish for salmon down around the Hendricks Bridge area. They would sometimes spend three weeks to a month fishing for salmon, and the Indian men would quite often pick hops in the hop yards in the Thurston and Walterville areas.

The two or three fenced fields immediately west of the ranch house where my grandparents lived were a regular stopping place for Indians. They liked to stop for overnight camping, because it was a place for their stock, and they could buy hay from Grandfather. They would camp on their way downriver and stop again on their way back.

The morning after one of these occasions my grandfather began to notice the sound of little puppies whining and whimpering, and it seemed to be coming from under his

house. He immediately guessed that one of the many dogs around the Indian encampment had probably crawled under the old house and had puppies, because, as usual, the encampment was overrun with dogs.

So he went outside to see if there was any way he could get under the house or to the source of the disturbance. But he could see there was no way he could get to them, because the house was built right close to the ground, and, of course, he was quite a large man. The puppies were evidently well back under the house.

He decided to walk down to the Indian encampment and find somebody that might know what could be done. He asked around to see if there was a dog missing, or if anybody knew if there might be a little dog that was expecting. Sure enough, there was an Indian dog that was just exactly in that condition, so he talked to the owner who came out to meet him. The man said, "Well, I'll tell you what we'd better do. I can't very well take that dog and those puppies along with us. They'll only be a few hours old. But, if you would be willing to feed the dog and take care of her until I come back here in probably about three weeks, then I'll stop and get her on my way back to the reservation." My grandfather said, well, he guessed maybe he could do that. So they made a deal, and my grandfather said, "Now you *will* stop on your way back and get her? Because I don't want a female dog and a bunch of puppies."

So the Indian said OK, he'd do that.

In about three or four weeks, after the Indians had fished for their salmon and got their vacation over with, why here they came back. The Indian, sure enough, came up to see Grandfather. He said he had stopped by to pick up his dog, so they went out to investigate how they were going to get under the house to get that dog out.

Well it proved to be something of a puzzle. In those days, you know, there was not much of a foundation built under houses. It was a big old two story log house, and it was only about six inches off the ground . . . just built on a few rocks. So Grandfather and the Indian talked about it a while, and they went in the house to see if they could locate the puppies. They could hear the puppies mewling and whining and determined that they were almost in front of the fireplace.

My grandfather and the Indian agreed that the only thing they could do was for Grandfather to take up a section of the floor in the living room in front of the fireplace. So they went out in my grandfather's wood shed, and got the proper tools; hammers and saws and whatever. Of course, it was just a bare floor. There was no carpeting or anything like that, just a bare wooden floor. So they pried and cut and hammered and took up quite a sizeable little section of floor, right in front of the fireplace in the middle of the sitting room. We looked down and there was a big dark hole under there. We couldn't really see the puppies, but you could hear 'em down there.

Then an additional problem showed up. They couldn't reach the puppies. They were farther back than they thought, but grandfather didn't want to tear up the whole living room floor. So he tried to reach the puppies, and the Indian tried too, but they couldn't get to them. I was standing there taking it all in as they speculated, and then their eyes hit on me. And so the Indian said, "How about her going down there and getting them?" I latched onto my grandfather. I wasn't in favor of that. It looked pretty dark, and cobwebby, and dirty down there. But my Grandpa said, "I'll hold on to you sister. I wouldn't let anything hurt you. You go down there and get the puppies for the Indian." But I said, "Oh no, grandfather, I don't want to go down there!"

I just loved my grandfather, but I was not open to persuasion. But the Indian was a pretty wily negotiator, and he came up with a proposition that no child could refuse. He said, "You tell her if she will go down there and get the puppies for me she can have her choice of any puppy that she brings up." No child can refuse that. So grandfather looked at me, and he kind of laughed. I think he knew I was hooked then.

"Alright sister," he said, "I'll hold right on to you, and we'll hold the lantern for you." My grandmother was standing there, and she said, "You wait, child, and I'll get a towel and tie it on your hair . . . (I had long curls) . . . so you won't get those spiders and cobwebs in your hair." So she tied a towel on my hair, and grandfather took me in his arms. I

was not very happy about that, but he let me down in that hole, and held on to me and the Indian held the lantern. He held onto my dress, and I got down there. I can't remember how many puppies there were, but they were mewling and crying. I suppose they put the mama dog outside, because I know she wasn't there at the time. So I handed those puppies up to the Indian and got 'em all out of there. My grandfather lifted me out of the hole, and I still remember those little puppies. Then he said, "You can have whichever one you want."

I remember how excited I was. I remember the one I took. It was a little tiny brown one with real curly hair just as silky and soft as it could be. And I can remember sitting there with him all cuddled up in my arms. The Indian kind of patted me on the shoulder, and he went on with his little dog and the rest of the puppies. I was just perfectly happy and perfectly satisfied with my day's work, and he was too.

Writer's note: This story of the charming encounter of a little girl and a litter of Indian puppies is taken from a tape recording I made on December 6, 1990 of Manena Schwering's personal recollections 81 years later. Although this printed version is considerably condensed, I have tried to retain the essence and some of the flavor of the narrator's extemporaneous and informal account of her experience. It is descriptive of circumstances in the years of her childhood, of the warm



Samuel C. Sparks, Manena's grandfather, ca. 1908. Manena Schwering collection, Courtesy Lane County Historical Museum.

family ties, and of a particularly congenial relationship between a pioneer gentleman and a wise native American. The respect and remarkable spirit of accommodation so evident between these two men of separate cultures serves us all as an inspiration.

Should the reader want more information about the early days around Blue River, the best source available is Manena Schwering's own fine article, *Changing Times in the Upper McKenzie Valley*, found in the 1984 Spring issue of **The Lane County Historian**. □

TIME BOOK for the

Month

December

1896

NAMES:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | Total Time | Rate p. day | AMOUNT \$ Cts. |
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|-----------------|--------|-------|---|---|----|---|------|
| Ed Jones | 42 | 7/100 | 2 | 2 | 50 | 1 | 1.00 |
| Duke Tracy | 7 | 142 | 3 | 3 | 50 | 1 | 1.05 |
| Joe Potts | 294 | 67 | 3 | 6 | 50 | 1 | 2.10 |
| Ben Pitcher | | 85 | 2 | 3 | 50 | 1 | 1.50 |
| Buttewart | | 12 | 2 | 8 | 50 | 1 | 2.80 |
| W. Griffith | 7/300 | | 4 | 2 | 50 | 1 | 1.70 |
| Ed. Schneider | 428 | | 4 | 4 | 50 | 1 | 1.90 |
| A. J. Nickel | | | 1 | 2 | 50 | 1 | 1.50 |
| Chas. Pitcher | 42.85 | | 3 | 4 | 50 | 1 | 2.10 |
| E. S. Holderman | 7 | | 1 | 4 | 50 | 1 | 1.50 |
| Joe Cole | 299.95 | | 3 | 9 | 50 | 1 | 3.15 |
| M. J. Rose | | | 3 | 4 | 50 | 1 | 1.40 |
| Frank Henderson | | | 3 | 3 | 50 | 1 | 1.05 |
| R. H. Mosby | | | 1 | 4 | 50 | 1 | 1.40 |
| Rouse | | | 1 | 4 | 50 | 1 | 1.40 |
| J. J. Moak | | | 2 | 2 | 50 | 1 | 1.40 |
| Ed. Yancey | 45.00 | | 3 | 3 | 50 | 1 | 1.05 |
| J. H. King | 7 | | 3 | 3 | 50 | 1 | 1.05 |
| Tommy King | 5 | | 3 | 3 | 50 | 1 | 1.05 |

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Possible articles for future issues:

1. Deerhorn, a name without a place.
2. Eugene Ice Arena and Figure Skating Club
3. History of Irving
4. A Pioneer Cemetery at Glenada

If you have any pictures, information or suggestions on these or other topics, please contact your editor at 345-3962.

Do you have pictures of early Lane County people, places, events? We would like to help you preserve these valuable bits of history for posterity. Photos can be copied and returned. If you have something to share, please contact your editor at the address inside front cover, or phone me at 345-3962.