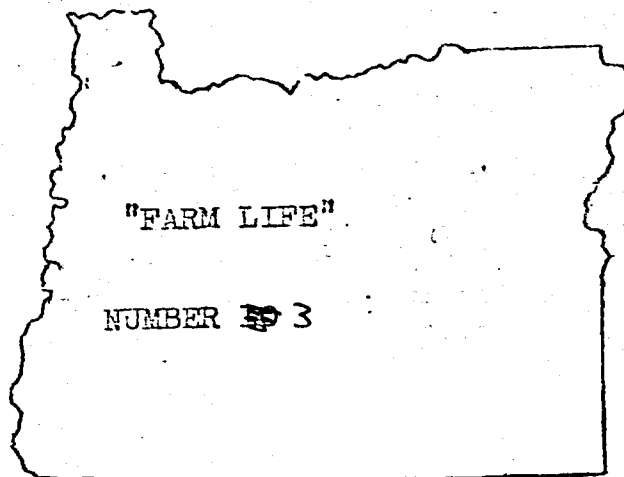


OREGON ODDITIES  
and  
ITEMS OF INTEREST



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The items in this bulletin, selected from the material compiled by the Federal Writers' Project and the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress Administration, are representative of the significant collections being made by these nation-wide programs.

The Historical Records Survey is inventorying all sources of early Oregon history, including county and state records, church archives, historic cemeteries, old manuscripts and imprints, old printing presses, monuments and relics, private diaries, letters, and memoirs, historic buildings, and Indian records and lore.

The chief undertaking of the Federal Writers' Project has been the American Guide Series of books. In Oregon as in all other states the work includes the state Guide, designed to acquaint Americans with America and to present to the visitor the history, industry, recreational advantages and scenic attractions of the state. The Oregon Guide, now in the final stages of editing will soon be added to the list of those already published which includes Idaho: A Guide in Word and Picture; Maine: A Guide "Down East"; Massachusetts: A Guide to its Places and People; New Hampshire: A Guide to the Granite State; Washington: City and Capital; Philadelphia: A Guide to the Birthplace of a Nation.

Over 100 books have been published by the Federal Writers' Project. The spring catalog, now in preparation, may be had upon request.

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When accepting responsible positions it is now customary for applicants to furnish bonds, but it would seem strange to young moderns were such a procedure necessary when entering into the marriage contract. At least one prudent pioneer bachelor, however, asked for cash security according to a field worker for the federal writers' project of the works progress administration who asked an old Oregonian for comment on the following which appeared in the Eugene Guard, July 31, 1869:

"Wants a Wife: A bachelor without encumbrance is desirous of obtaining a wife. She must be accomplished, able to milk cows and play the piano forte; she must be fond of children, willing to mend their clothes, and a good hand to raise chickens. The advertiser scorns to marry for money, but it is of the utmost importance that the lady's relatives or friends furnish a written character of her ability and worth, and as a trifling matter, said friends would be also requested to deposit \$500 with the advertiser as a proof of their judgment that the lady is what she says she is. No widow, grass or otherwise need apply. Address: R. S., c/o Post Office, Eugene City."

The pioneer called upon to verify the suggestion that such advertisements were customary in early Oregon, evaded a direct reply but proved by his answers that his ideas have kept pace with modern times.

"Of course," he said, "I wouldn't argue the point, but it seems to me that a good milker just naturally ought to be a good piano player. The wrist movement in milking should come in right handy on the piano, and say, you got to have nimble fingers to milk ten cows. That's what women had to do sometimes in the old days. 'A good hand at raising chickens--fond of children?' he read on.

"Well, a woman that's good with chickens is just bound to be good with children. Children and chicks are a lot alike, and goodness knows there was a plenty of both underfoot when I was a boy. We had big families in those days," he explained. "There were twelve of us."

"The advertiser wouldn't think much of the Duke of Windsor's judgment, would he?" asked the field worker.

"He says 'no widow, grass or otherwise', doesn't he? Why should a man object to an otherwise widow? Maybe he objected to women being wise at all, even otherwise," laughed the old Oregonian. "Of course," he concluded, "he might have taken a chance, and if the woman was not satisfactory, he could've sued his father-in-law. That's what another fellow did back in 1872,-- sued his wife's father for \$5000 because she turned out to be sickly and peevish rather than strong and cheerful as she had been represented."

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 "Mr. Bozorth who has been up the river the past few days returned Monday evening well supplied with fruits and vegetables he has been purchasing. He has a mammoth squash weighing 112 pounds which is attracting the attention of many." The Weekly Astorian, October 13, 1877.

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 Hogs were numerous and feed scarce in the early days. To provide for his swine John Clark built a fish trap on the Umpqua tidoland adjacent to his pig pens. When the tide came in, the traps filled with fat sturgeon. When the water receded Clark waded out and pitched the fish from the trap to the pens. Whether or not the side bacon and hams he cured from this source were permeated with a piscatory flavor, no one has reported. Perhaps he sold his hogs on foot with caveat emptor as a condition of sales.

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 "Hans Anderson, in the Nehalem Valley, has raised some of the finest tobacco for cigar work that can be found. It is of good flavor, free from stems and cigar makers ought to see it. Mr. F. Ferrell of this City has samples of it." Daily Astorian, January 27, 1878.

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 "The industrial station of O.R.&N. at Blalock is well pleased with their experiments on the growing of tobacco, and from present indications it will only be a few years until this will be an important industry. In 1864 while marching through Grand Ronde Valley, Col. Geo. B. Curry filled his pipe from tobacco grown here and well remembered the extraordinary strength it contained. If properly cultivated it might make a

commercial article." Eastern Oregon Observer, September 2, 1893.

Evolution of the seal of Clatsop county furnishes commentary on industrial interests in that district. Dairying and fishing, once publicized in the county seal, are still of major importance. The first records of the Clatsop county probate court reveal that there being no regular seal, the judge ordered the documents to be stamped with the impression of a United States five dollar gold coin.

September 2, 1850, the probate court ordered that the seal be a "Durham Cow with the words Clatsop engraved underneath the same and that David Ingalls be authorized to procure a seal accordingly." Subsequently, July 5, 1852, the court ordered "The clerk of the Board to provide a seal for the county with the following device: A salmon with the words 'County Seal' at the top and Clatsop County underneath, to be paid for out of the first money that is paid into the county treasury." The present Clatsop county seal has the Oregon state emblem in the center.

The first farm recorded in Grant county was a claim by Stephen O. Burdge, who took possession and claimed a "certain Tract of Land" which he alleged he took up for "farming purposes, being a man of Family." Located June 10, 1863, and recorded November 29, 1863.

The first shipment of a wheat cargo around Cape Horn to the eastern seaboard is credited to Joseph Watt of Amity. When eastern commission merchants viewed the plump grains they called in an expert who gave it as his opinion that the wheat had become damp and the grains swollen. In no other way could he account for the size and whiteness of the grain. As a consequence Watt lost eight thousand dollars on this venture.

The October issue of Harper's New Monthly Magazine of 1882 gives space to an article called In the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Among agricultural products wheat comes in for discussion. "All cereals are raised here, but you will see little of anything except wheat, which for half a century has made Oregon famous. In 1831, it is related, the first wheat was sowed at French Prairie,

in Marion county; and that same field yielded thirty-five bushels to the acre in 1879. Of wheat, the yield to the acre runs from twenty to thirty-five more bushels, full and heavy grain of exceeding by five to nine pounds the standard weight of sixty pounds to the bushel."

Quoting from the Pacific Northwest Ernest Ingersoll, the author of the article says, "The wheat of this region is a plump, full berry, from which flour of uncommon whiteness is made. Its excellence in this respect is so fully recognized that in the English market it commands a premium of from three to five cents over the best produced in California. At Portland vessels are loaded, and the grain or flour starts on its long voyage around the Horn."

Joseph Watt, credited with making the first shipment to the Atlantic seaboard, is also thought to have shipped the first cargo of Willamette Valley wheat to Liverpool, this being the first venture into world agricultural markets.

"John Davenport, esq., of Marion county returned from the states with a hive of bees in good health and as numerous as when he started with them. They were confined in a hive of the ordinary size, three sides made of wire gauze the fourth out of boards." Oregon Statesman, August 1, 1854.

Bees were first brought from California in 1849 and sold for \$125 a colony. During the 1850's and 1860's many bees were imported by ship and overland. Some of those escaped and took refuge in trees. Therefore it is not unusual to find pure Italian strains of bees living in hollow trees.

Animal pelts figured largely in Oregon merchants' accounts and in county finances many years subsequent to the fur-trading era. In 1880 more than ten thousand deer hides were shipped from Prineville. It was said that deer were so plentiful and came so close to town that it sounded as if a war was in progress just outside the city limits. Coos county tale of the time relates that elk were so numerous and so unafraid that it was necessary to kick them out of the trails.

An account book kept by Amos D.

Hyland at Lowell, Oregon, reveals that Jim Chuck Chuck, a well known Indian received credit for 95 pounds of deer hide in one day. Hyland's little country store received as high as 300 pounds of hides a day, large single stag hides selling for as much as \$4.50 each. Coon skins were worth 20¢, mink pelts 40¢ to 60¢, fisher pelts \$1.25, wildcat hides 20¢, and beaver pelts \$1.25 each. Deer hams, an article of trade, brought fifty cents each.

Bounties on wild animals varied according to the number and character of the animals. Files of the Pendleton East Oregonian show that 779 squirrel scalps were turned in to the Walla Walla auditor's office in a single day, May 5, 1882.

Linn county bounties in 1835 included panther or cougars, \$5.00; bear, \$2.50; wildcat or catamount, \$1.00; wolf or coyote, \$15.00, and digger squirrel, one cent. The following year the bounty on coyotes was reduced to \$10.00 each, indicating perhaps that the number of these animals had been reduced. By 1891 coyote scalps commanded but \$2.50 in Benton county.

The same year Crook county set \$2.50 as the bounty for cougar, panther, or bear, and \$1.00 each for wildcat, catamount, wolf, and coyote. Two years later petitioners appealed to the Umatilla county court to set a bounty on coyotes, praying this help to relieve them from herd ravages. It was not until 1889, however, that Umatilla county paid its first coyote bounty, a one dollar payment to J. Shuerman for a scalp.

"J. C. McFarland planted cranberries at Hauser in 1887. They came into bearing in 1891. Plants were brought from New England. Wild cranberries were previously found there, but this was the first commercial planting in Coos county." Coast Mail, October 26, 1891.

Records of a trial, dated January 5, 1869, reveal that J. W. Campbell, Columbia county school superintendent, sued W. D. Hoxter, charging that "on or about the tenth day of April A.D. 1868 and on divers other days and times.... the said defendant with his sheep of about 1300 head forcibly and wrongfully entered upon and with feet in walking trod down, trampled upon, injured and destroyed the

grass and erbage growing and being thereon, and with sheep eat up and destroyed" the grass and "with sheep eat up and depastured the grass" and that the feet of the said sheep "tore up and injured the sod, earth, soil" to the damage of \$250.

The county court found that the lands were common school lands and that the plaintiff should be awarded double judgment. The case was appealed to the circuit court, where a jury reversed the county commissioners' decision and awarded the plaintiff only fifty dollars.

"If any one wants to behold a sight that will cause the mouth to water, let him go down to Silas Wright's on Rhea Creek and stroll through his two acre strawberry patch. Such a sight does not often greet the eyes in this country, and who would not pay four bits a gallon for them?" (Note use of "bits", now unused.) Hepner Weekly Gazette, June 28, 1833.

"Whispering" Thompson was a legendary figure of the Umatilla country whose ordinary conversational voice was said to have thundered across two counties. J. G. "Whispering" Thompson, the best mule skinner east of the Cascades, distinguished himself as a freighter in the seventies and eighties. Each of the fourteen mules in his team understood every word he addressed to them, and responded at once, not only to the jerk-line, but to the persuasion of pebbles which Thompson carried in a bucket on the seat beside him and which he threw with unerring aim. His familiar cry, "Gee-e-e-e, Nig!" was recognized by old timers as a signal that Whispering Thompson was somewhere within a three-mile radius.

"When Whispering Thompson was leaving Meacham on top of the Blue Mountains, you could hear his voice calling to that mule team clear in La Grande," declared Fred Andrews, now living south of Echo. Others say when Thompson was gently urging his mule drawn caravan of covered wagons to leave Umatilla Landing, his voice, louder than any steamboat whistle ever heard bellowing on the Columbia, could be heard in Pendleton. He was opposed to monopolies, detested railroads, and often held heated discussions with himself on these subjects. When asked why he talked to himself, he replied that he liked "to

talk to a smart man once in a while."

One time he wagered that he could turn a fourteen-mule team in the intersection of Main and Court streets in Pendleton, and won the bet. After Thompson retired from freighting and settled on a farm north of Echo, Thomas G. Smith worked for him. Whispering would put his head out the kitchen window and call instructions to Smith a mile and a half away. Smith declares that he heard every word.

In the East Oregonian, March 12, 1881, was a personal: "Whispering Thompson made his first trip of the spring season to Pendleton the other day. He warbles to Nig as sweetly as ever."

A few months later this item appeared: "Last Wednesday the flute-like voice of Whispering Thompson could be heard about two miles; we went to see what was the matter and found his 14-mule team in front of a pretty good house which was moved about a fourth of a mile in about four hours--Thompson gently encouraging the mules."

J. G. "Whispering" Thompson was born on the island of Nantucket, date unknown. Thomas G. Smith believes that he died about 1890 and was buried in the Echo cemetery, but a diligent search by Mr. Smith has failed to reveal his grave, as apparently no marker was placed there.

In the Oregonian, March 29, 1839, George H. Himes wrote: "According to the best information obtainable the first seed was broken by a plow in the hands of Etienne Lucier, who came out with Wilson P. Hunt's party in 1811, on Swan Island, in the winter of 1830-31. A crop was planted in the spring of 1831 but was destroyed by the June freshet. Mr. Lucier then abandoned the farm and took up another near Champeog, upon which he lived until his death on March 6, 1853."

The first apple tree in Oregon was planted in the yard of the Rev. Gustavus Hines in 1844. Rev. Mr. Hines was a missionary, and author of "History of Oregon," published in the 50's which went through several editions. In 1854 his brother, Rev. Harvey K. Hines, harvested 12 bushels of apples which he sold to W. P. Burns for \$9 a bushel. Harvey K. Hines was the author of "Missionary History of the Pacific Northwest."

The last chapter in the history of the first apple tree appeared in the Gold Beach Gazette for April 22, 1895: "... But the historic old tree which has got to be more than a foot in diameter and taller than the house, is to come down to make room for improvements and it will be manufactured into canes which will be sold for the benefit of the church exchequer."

In 1847 an assortment of fruit trees and a sack of apple seeds were brought across the plains by Henderson Lowell and William Meek. Roots from seedlings planted at French Prairie and Oregon City, and sprouts from wild cherry and wild plum roots from Rogue River valley furnished the first grafting stock. One graft the first year bore one big, red apple and its fame spread and brought people flocking to see it. The Lowell house is still standing at Milwaukie on U. S. highway 99.

The first box of apples placed on the sidewalk of Portland by Lowelling brought \$1 for each apple--\$75 for the box. The abnormal craving of the fruit-hungry people caused great crowds to gather around wagons peddling fruit in the streets. In 1853 apple boxes were bound with iron bands to prevent them from being stolen, and shipped to San Francisco where they brought \$2 a pound. In 1855, 6000 bushels sold for \$20 to \$30 a bushel. In 1856 one box Esopus apples brought a net profit in California of \$60. In 1856 three boxes of winesaps brought \$102 in Portland. The Willamette valley became known as the "Land of the Big Red Apples."

From the Gold Beach Gazette, May 1893: "One of the claims for damage Indian depredations during the early days of Oregon is that for \$500 for the loss of a wagon load of apples which were being brought to southern Oregon to obtain the fabulous prices then ruling, when the wagon was captured by Indians and the contents lost."

Of the orchard trees set out by J. C. Avery in the 1850's, two, a red and a yellow sweet apple, are still living. Avery was the founder of Corvallis.

An apple tree at Merlin marks the site of the Haines farm, where the family was massacred in 1855.