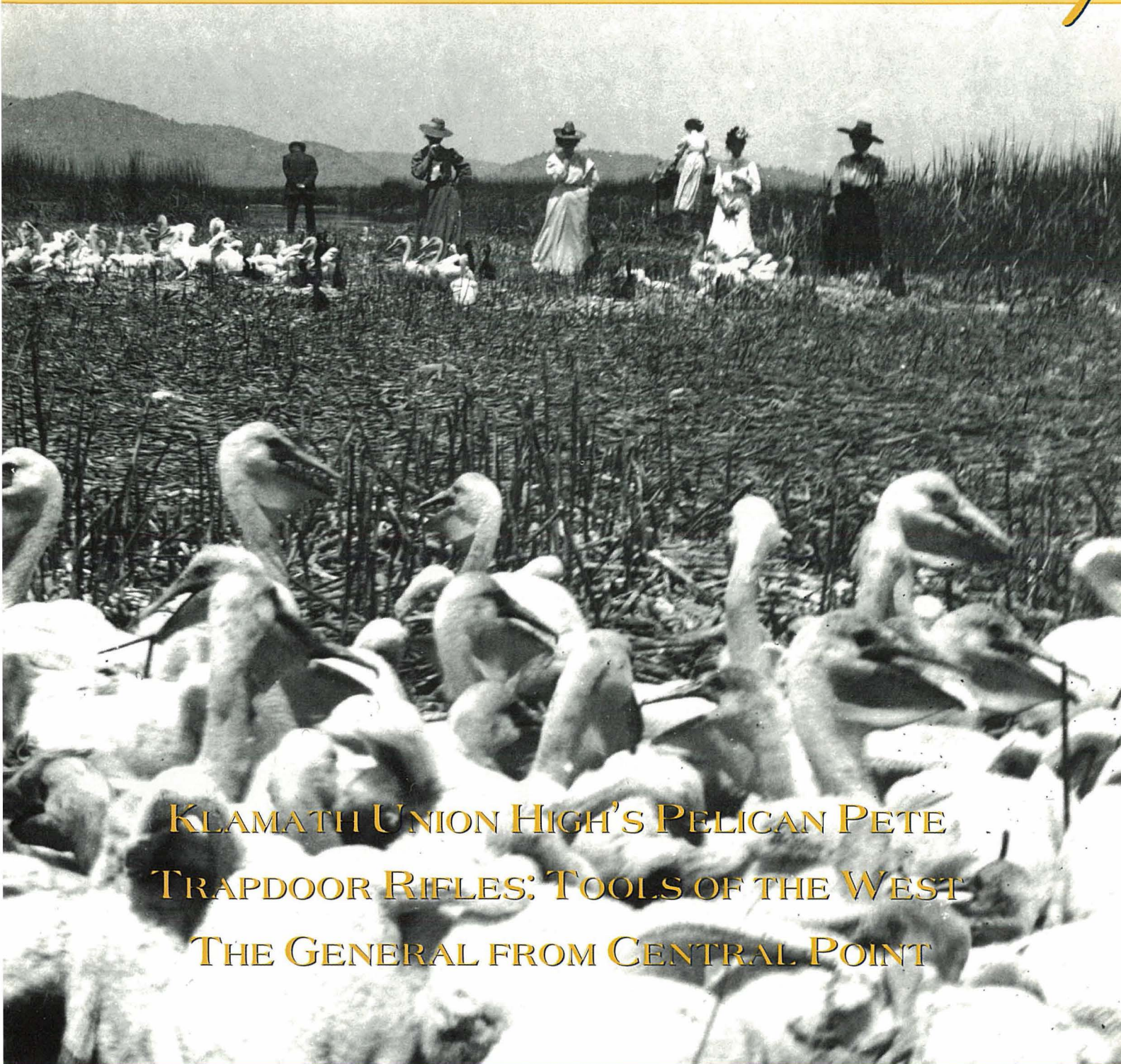


SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE

March 2001 Vol. 3, No. 3

Today



KLAMATH UNION HIGH'S PELICAN PETE
TRAPDOOR RIFLES: TOOLS OF THE WEST
THE GENERAL FROM CENTRAL POINT



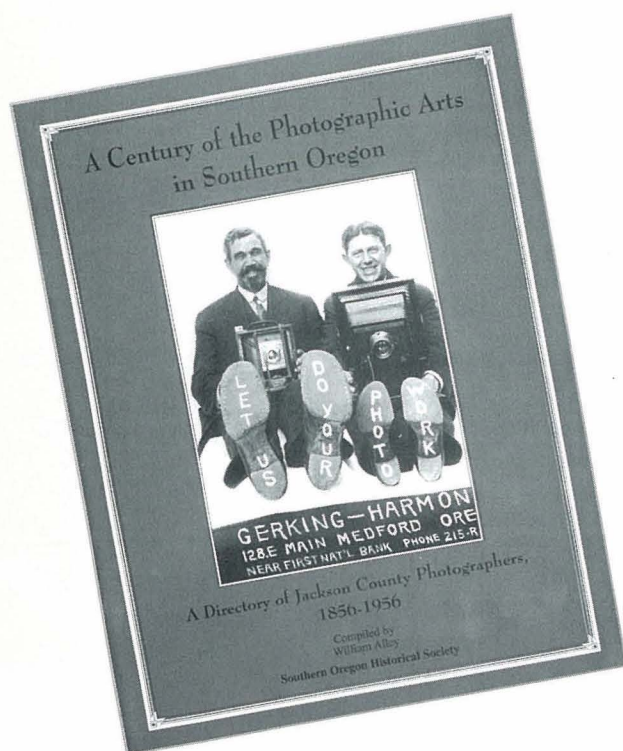
A New Membership Benefit



The Southern Oregon Historical Society is proud to announce it is part of the *Time Travelers* program.

If you have a yearning to travel, here is your chance to visit great museums in 42 states across the country. Look for the **Time Travelers** logo. All you have to do is show your Southern Oregon Historical Society membership card to receive this special benefit.

Please call Membership Coordinator Susan Smith at 541/773-6536 for a brochure of the museums participating in this program.



SOHS Historian Receives Award

Society Senior Historian/Research Manager William Alley was awarded a Certificate of Commendation from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) for his compilation, *A Century of the Photographic Arts in Southern Oregon: A Directory of Jackson County Photographers, 1856-1956*.

The AASLH Annual Awards Program is the nation's most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of local, state, and regional history.

The directory is available for purchase at the Research Library in the History Center or at the History Store in Jacksonville. Call 541/773-6536 for more information.

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We invite YOU to become a member!

Join now! Our goal is 2,000 members by June 30, 2001. Member support is more important than ever due to the 14.5% budget cut by the county this past June.

Your membership will support: preservation of Southern Oregon's rich heritage; Society exhibits and educational events; outreach to schools; workshops for adults and children; living history programs; and tours and demonstrations at historic Hanley Farm.

Members receive *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*, the Society's monthly magazine with newsletter, providing a view into the past and keeping you up-to-date on services provided by the Society.

For membership information, call Susan Smith at 773-6536.

SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE
TODAY

Editorial Guidelines

Feature articles average 3,000 to 4,000 (pre-edited) words. Other materials range from 500 to 1,000 words. Electronic submissions are accepted on 3-1/4-inch disks and should be accompanied by a hard-copy printout. Cite all sources and construct endnotes and outlines using the *Chicago Manual of Style*. The author is responsible for verification of cited facts. A selection of professional, unscreened photographs and/or line art should accompany submission—black-and-white or color. The Southern Oregon Historical Society reserves the right to use Society images in place of submitted material. All material should be labeled with author's name, mailing address, and telephone number. Manuscripts will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope stamped with sufficient postage. Authors should provide a brief autobiographical note at the end of manuscripts.

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SOUTHERN OREGON HERITAGE *Today*

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DRAWING COURTESY OF KLAMATH UNION HIGH SCHOOL

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PHOTO COURTESY OF KC MUSEUM

ON THE COVER

Turn-of-the-century Victorian bird-
watchers visit a pelican rookery amid the
tules on Lower Klamath Lake, getting
right up close to the young birds.



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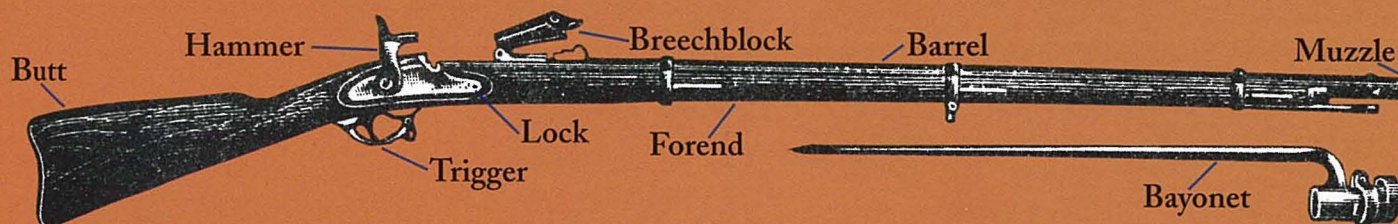
Southern Oregon Heritage Today

is published monthly by the Southern Oregon Historical Society.
106 N. Central Ave., Medford, OR 97501-5926.
(541) 773-6536

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Trapdoors and Needle Guns

by Bill Powell



AMONG THE SCORES OF HISTORIC FIREARMS IN THE collections of the Southern Oregon Historical Society, one class of nineteenth-century single-shot cartridge rifles is particularly well represented. These are the "Trapdoor Springfields," and visitors to the Jacksonville Museum may wonder how on earth these rifles got such a peculiar name.

Before the Civil War had ended, army planners realized that the muzzleloading rifled musket carried by the majority of Union and Confederate infantry was obsolete. Typical of these arms was the Springfield Model of 1863, which required the soldier to tear open a paper cartridge, pour the loose powder down the muzzle, ram home the thumb-sized .58-caliber minie ball using the steel ramrod kept in a groove in the stock, replace the ramrod, then place a metallic percussion cap over the nipple at the rear of the rifle, cock the hammer, aim and fire—all while being shot at! The advantages of quick-loading, self-contained metallic cartridges were obvious.

Dreaming of lucrative post-war government contracts, inventors scrambled to devise cartridge firearms to sell to the War Department. But army ordnance officers wondered if the Civil War muskets soon to be surplus might be cheaply converted to handle metallic cartridges. Erskine Allin, the master armorer at the government arsenal at Springfield, Massachusetts, offered his design in 1865.¹ Using the "Allin Conversion," arsenal gunmakers simply milled away the top rear of the barrel of an 1863 Springfield musket, then attached a breechblock that could be lifted open and flopped forward on a hinge to admit the cartridge, then swung closed and latched shut, like a trapdoor in a cabin floor, hence the descriptive popular name, "Trapdoor Springfield." A second nickname, "needle gun," derived from the long, pointed firing pin through the breechblock that delivered the hammer blow to the primer at the rear of the cartridge, causing it to fire.²

With some modifications, Allin's system became the Army standard until 1892, and was popular not only with the troops but

with civilians as well. The Society's collection includes eight Trapdoor Springfields. Why so many? The guns were widely used throughout the West by soldiers and civilians alike, partly because the government was willing to sell them to the public, especially after design changes made earlier models obsolete.³ (The 1902 Sears Roebuck catalog lists surplus Trapdoor Springfields with twenty cartridges for \$2.75.)⁴ Soldiers were also permitted to buy their service weapons upon mustering out. And the ammunition was widely available.

The rifles themselves were beautifully made, accurate at long range, and powerful. William Cody used an early Trapdoor in .50-70 caliber (a .50-caliber bullet over seventy grains of black powder) to supply bison meat to the railroad crews building the Kansas-Pacific line, earning the nickname Buffalo Bill for himself and the term "buffalo Springfield" for the army's "needle gun."⁵

Infantry soldiers deployed from Fort Klamath to try to force Captain Jack's Modocs from the Lava Beds at Tule Lake in the winter of 1872-73 carried Trapdoor Springfields in .50-70 caliber similar to Society Artifact No. 56.196, a Springfield made in 1869 and said to have been used in the Modoc War.⁶ This rifle was owned by Fred Isham, son of early Southern Oregon pioneers Southwick and Keturah Baird Isham, and whose grandfather was killed by a grizzly bear near Grave Creek in 1864.⁷

Trapdoors also figured in the Bannock War in Eastern Oregon and Idaho against the Bannocks and Paiutes in 1878, a conflict in which Artifact No. 855, a Trapdoor in .45-70 caliber (a .45-caliber bullet over seventy grains of powder) manufactured at Springfield in 1874, is said to have served.

George Armstrong Custer's troopers clutched Trapdoor .45-70 carbines very much like Artifact No. 3260 as they clattered to their doom on the banks of the Little Bighorn River in June 1876. Custer also owned a customized Trapdoor sporting rifle in some ways similar to Artifact No. 66.79.1, a .50-70 Trapdoor once



Acc. #3260



The Trapdoor Springfield gets its name from the hinged breechblock, which opens like a trapdoor, left. After the cartridge is inserted in the rear of the barrel, center, the breechblock is swung closed and latched shut, right, and when the hammer is cocked the rifle is ready to be fired.

Below right is Artifact No. 3260, a Trapdoor Springfield in carbine configuration, with the wood forend extending only halfway up the shortened barrel, made in 1888 in .45-70 caliber. The more compact carbines were issued to mounted troops; foot soldiers carried the longer, heavier rifles such as Artifact No. 66.79.1, Trapdoor Springfield Model of 1868 in .50-70 caliber owned by pioneer William Mathes, at far right. This much-used rifle has been altered, with custom double triggers for a lighter pull, and a thinned and reshaped buttstock carved to accommodate a leather cartridge holder.

PHOTO CONTENTS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



The Trapdoor Springfield was chambered for the stubby .50-70 Government cartridge, left, from 1866 to 1873, when the army adopted the .45-70 cartridge, center, capable of accurate fire at much longer range. The cartridges replaced the much clumsier loose powder, .58-caliber minie ball and percussion caps used in muzzleloading muskets during the Civil War.



Above is a closeup of Artifact No. 56.196, a Model 1868 Trapdoor that is said to have been used during the Modoc War of 1872-73. The lock plate is stamped behind the hammer with the date 1863, indicating that it was originally part of a Civil War-era musket. Just forward of the hammer, the lock plate bears the federal eagle motif (detail, upper left), and "U.S. Springfield," the name of the government arsenal where the rifle was manufactured. Above left is a detail of proof marks found on the left rear of the barrel of many Trapdoors. The VP and eagle head mean the gun was viewed by an inspector after the second polishing of the barrel. Below right, the leather loops screwed to the buttstock of the Mathes rifle holding four rounds of .50-70 ammunition would have made it easy to reload the single-shot rifle in a hurry.

owned by Jackson County pioneer William Mathes.⁸ The Mathes gun has precision double triggers just like Custer's sporting rifle, and the stock has been cut to hold four .50-70 cartridges. This rifle would have been an excellent choice for protecting cattle and sheep from the occasional grizzly that still roamed the hills above the Little Applegate where Mathes grazed his herds in the late 1800s.⁹

Another interesting Trapdoor in the Society's collection is Artifact No. 56.207, built at Springfield Arsenal in 1882 with an unrifled 20-gauge barrel, to be used as a shotgun. The armory built 1,376 of these guns using condemned Civil War muskets. Called "Foragers," these shotguns were supplied to army troops at remote outposts for the soldiers to use in hunting ducks, rabbits, grouse, and other small game to supplement "the often dreary, salt-laced diet of enlisted men and officers alike."¹⁰ This gun is said to have been found at one of the Table Rocks.

Although the new Krag-Jorgensen bolt-action repeater began to replace the old single-shot Trapdoors in the hands of regular army troops early in the 1890s, National Guard, volunteer and other second-line units were armed with Trapdoors Springfields well into the twentieth century, and many members of the Second Oregon Volunteer Infantry carried Trapdoors when they steamed across the Pacific to the Philippines during the Spanish-American War.

Springfield Armory built more than 600,000 Trapdoors between 1865 and 1893, and some are still in use by hunters and target shooters trying to keep the old traditions alive. In fact, the Trapdoor remains so popular that it is now in production once again—in Italy! 🇮🇹

Bill Powell is guest editor of Southern Oregon Heritage Today, and enjoys shooting Trapdoor Springfields.

ENDNOTES:

1. Malden D. Waite and Bernard D. Ernst, *Trapdoor Springfield* (Highland Park, N.J.: The Gun Room Press, 1980), p. 6.
2. Louis Garavaglia and Charles Worman, *Firearms of the American West, 1866-1894* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), p. 9.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
4. Waite and Ernst, p. 194.
5. Garavaglia and Worman, p. 136.
6. Erwin Thompson, *The Modoc War, 1872-73, Lava Beds National Monument* (National Park Service, 1967), p. 212.
7. Martha Arman Murphy, editor, *A History of Josephine County*, (Grants Pass: Josephine County Historical Society, 1988), p. 168.
8. Garavaglia and Worman, pp. 34-35.
9. Joseph Gaston, *The Centennial History of Oregon* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911), Vol. II, pp. 565-567.
10. Waite and Ernst, p. 97.



Acc. #3260

Acc. #66.79.1

Acc. #56.196

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Things To Do in March

PROGRAMS : (see listings below for complete descriptions)

	DATE & TIME	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
March Craft of the Month	Museum hours	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Family Tree Workshop; free
A Woman's Place	Sat., Mar. 3, 1 - 3pm	RUCH PUBLIC LIBRARY 7388 Hwy. 238, Ruch	Slide presentation; free
	Thurs., Mar. 8, 1 - 3pm	MORROW HEIGHTS 176 Wards Creek Rd., Rogue River	
	Sat., Mar. 31, 1 - 3pm	GRESHAM ROOM Ashland Library	
Chautauqua programs	Fri., Mar. 16, 7pm	GOLD HILL GRANGE 404 6th Ave.	Women and Technological Change; free
	Sat., Mar. 17, 7pm	HISTORY CENTER	
	Sun., Mar. 18, 1 pm	TALENT HISTORICAL SOCIETY 206 E. Main, 512-8838	All day activities; call for information
100 Years of Women's Fashions	Sun., Mar. 18, 3pm	TALENT COMMUNITY HALL 206 E. Main	Slide presentation; free
Public Heritage Fair Day	Sat., Mar. 17, 1 - 4pm	JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM & CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Hands-on activities; free with admission to the museums
Up, Up and Away	Wed., Mar. 21, 10 - 11am and 3:30 - 4:30pm	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Kite workshop; ages 3-6; \$3 members/\$4 non-members
America 1900	Thurs., Mar. 22, 7 - 8:30pm	HISTORY CENTER	PBS video; free

PROGRAM DETAILS

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.

MARCH CRAFT OF THE MONTH

Family Tree

Celebrate your family's history by creating your own family tree.

A WOMAN'S PLACE

In celebration of Women's History Month, the Society pays tribute to Rogue Valley women and the roles they filled from the 1850s up to WWI. Cultural and social changes are explored through the lives of two centuries of women in this slide presentation.

PUBLIC HERITAGE FAIR DAY

Families are invited to take part in a variety of hands-on activities celebrating Oregon's heritage and history. Create "dentalia shell necklaces," churn butter, and celebrate Oregon's state symbols at this entertaining event. Free with admission to the museums.

UP, UP AND AWAY!

Join us as we learn the history behind the kites which have filled earth's skies for at least two thousand years. Participants will learn the folklore and culture surrounding

kites and create their very own kite to be flown at home. Preregistration and prepayment are required by 5 p.m. Friday, March 16!

AMERICA 1900

Step back in time as the Southern Oregon Historical Society presents a portion of the PBS program, *America 1900*. Following the 45-minutes of video highlights, Beekman Living History participants will talk about their experiences interpreting the year 1911. In conjunction with this program, the Society is recruiting volunteers and a few paid staff positions for the summer 2001 Beekman Living History program. Piano students in their teens, a hired girl in her early twenties, and family members from mid-forties to mid-seventies are needed. Training begins in April. If acting the part of a person from the past sounds intriguing to you, call 773-6536 to preregister or for more information.

CHAUTAUQUA PROGRAMS

Rather than bemoan women's failure to become engineers, Judith McGaw asks what women already know about technology and whether their historic experience offers a different and useful perspective on

technological change. Her firearms talk provides an opportunity to ask how the use of a technology deemed "masculine" affects women. Her bra talk explores what constitutes "invention" and "progress." The outhouse talk finds that technological change looks surprisingly different when viewed through women's eyes.

March 16—Don't Shoot Where You Eat:

Firearms and Femininity in America

March 17—If Men Wore Bras: What

Women Know About Technology

March 18—Why Not Outhouses?:

Listening to Women About Technological Change (Programs made possible in part by the Oregon Council for the Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.)

SPECIAL SPRING BREAK OPENING

JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM



CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

March 26 & 27
12 - 5pm

EXHIBITS : (see listings below for complete descriptions)

	LOCATION	MUSEUM HOURS
Century of Photography: 1856-1956 The History of Southern Oregon from A to Z Talent Historical Society Sweethearts at Work and Play	HISTORY CENTER	Mon. - Fri., 9am - 5pm
Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker Politics of Culture: Collecting the Native American Experience History of Camp White Hannah Hall of Justice	JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM	Wed. - Sat., 10am - 5pm Sunday, noon - 5pm
Ongoing 'hands on history' exhibits	CHILDREN'S MUSEUM	Wed. - Sat., 10am - 5pm Sunday, noon - 5pm

EXHIBIT DETAILS

FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.

CENTURY OF PHOTOGRAPHY: 1856-1956

Highlights the work of two area photographers, Peter Britt and James Verne Shangle, with cameras from the Society's collection.

THE HISTORY OF SOUTHERN OREGON FROM A TO Z

Do you know your ABC's of Southern Oregon history? Even local oldtimers might learn a thing or two from the History Center windows along Sixth and Central as each letter of the alphabet tells a different story about the people, places, and events that have shaped the region we live in. Before Bigfoot there was "Reelfoot," the huge grizzly bear that wreaked havoc in the Rogue Valley in the late 1800s. After that, Bozo was clowning around in Jacksonville, and how about that guy named Fosbury whose big success at the 1968 Olympics was a real flop?

SWEETHEARTS AT WORK AND PLAY

The Southern Oregon Antiques and Collectibles Association's mission is to promote growth of knowledge in the antiques and collectibles fields. To this end, it donates reference books to Jackson County Library Services and displays collections at branch libraries. Because of common goals, SOACC and the Society continue to partner in displays and programs. On display through April, the exhibit features an international thimble collection and a rhinestone jewelry collection of rings, butterfly and other pins and necklaces, including a 53-inch rope of pearls.

HALL OF JUSTICE

History of the former Jackson County Courthouse.

MINER, BAKER, FURNITURE MAKER

Explores the development of the Rogue Valley and the impact the industrial revolution had on the settlement of Oregon.

POLITICS OF CULTURE: *Collecting the Native American Experience*

Cultural history of local tribes and discussion of contemporary collecting issues.

HISTORY OF CAMP WHITE

Perhaps the military post that has had the largest impact on Medford and Jackson County in recent history, was Camp White. Built in 1942, it served as the training depot for the 91st and 96th Divisions as well as other smaller combat units. At its peak, it housed more than 30,000 officers, men, women, and nurses, and would be the largest military facility in Oregon. The exhibit highlights an 03-A3 rifle, 81mm mortar, Japanese rifles and machine gun and Camp White hospital bunkbeds and bed, blanket, and nurse in uniform.

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Explore home and occupational settings from the 1850s to the 1930s through "hands-on-history."

NEW LOCATION/HOURS/PHONE NUMBER FOR ROGUE VALLEY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

RVGS has moved to 95 Houston Road, Phoenix. Mailing address: P.O. Box 1468, Phoenix 97535. Phone: 541/512-2340. RVGS and its library are open Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.; closed Sunday. Call for further information.

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY SITES

PHONE: (541) 773-6536
unless listed otherwise

FAX (541) 776-7994

E-MAIL info@sohs.org

WEBSITE www.sohs.org

HISTORY CENTER

106 N. Central, Medford
Mon - Fri, 9:00am to 5:00pm

RESEARCH LIBRARY

106 N. Central, Medford
Tues - Fri, 1:00 to 5:00pm

JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM & CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

5th and C, Jacksonville
Wed - Sat, 10:00am to 5:00pm
Sun, noon to 5:00pm

U.S. HOTEL

3rd and California, Jacksonville
Upstairs room available for rent.

JACKSONVILLE HISTORY STORE

Sat, 10:00am to 5:00pm
Sun, 11:00am to 5:00pm

THIRD STREET ARTISAN STUDIO

3rd and California, Jacksonville
reopens Memorial Day Weekend

C.C. BEEKMAN HOUSE

California & Laurelwood, Jacksonville

CATHOLIC RECTORY

4th & C streets, Jacksonville

HANLEY FARM

1053 Hanley Road
(open by special appointment)
(541) 773-2675.

HISTORIC OPEN HOUSE LISTINGS:

• State Historic Preservation Office

prd.state.or.us - click on
"publication"

PHONE: 503-378-4168

• Southern Oregon Historical Society

PHONE: 541-773-6536

December's Mystery Object was a mercury flask. Congratulations to William W. Cox of Central Point, for answering correctly!



FIGHTING SPIRIT: the history of *Pelican Pete*

by Doug Foster

PHOTO BY DON HUMMEL

I STILL THINK OF MYSELF AS A PELICAN, though it's not something I tell everyone. It's a good example of the firm hold the past can have on a person. Forty years ago, when I was a student at Klamath Union High School ("K.U.") in Klamath Falls, the school mascot was a white pelican called Pelican Pete. We also had a Pelican Ski Club, a Pelican Service Club, and the Pelicanettes. Sometimes, when I'm alone, I can still hear the cheerleaders yelling, "Go you mighty Pelicans! Fight! Fight! Fight!" And I still take offense if I hear someone slight a pelican; fortunately, that situation doesn't often arise.

A firm believer in the value of studying history, I thought it time to explore our roots, Pete's and mine. Bob Simonson, the current K.U. principal whose business card is embossed with a Pelican Pete logo, directed me to the 1929 high school yearbook, which announced that Pete had been chosen as the school's "patron saint." The yearbook confided that Pete was very angry about this familiar limerick:

"What a wonderful bird is the Pelican;
His beak can hold more than his belican;
He puts enough in his beak to last for a week,
And I don't see how in-etc.-etc.-etc.-"

This was quoted, I assume, to get any anti-pelican feelings out in the open.

The 1929 yearbook also included this inspirational letter from Pete to the student body:

"Here is what I expect of you. I want you all to pattern after the Pelican in everything. We are proud of our strength and determination in making long flights. I want you to put this same 'Pelican' strength and determination in your studying and school life. ... Another thing we Pelicans are proud of is our cleanliness. All Pelicans lead a clean life. Last, but far from the least, is the Pelican fighting spirit. It is a known fact that when two Pelicans are fighting neither gives up until one is conquered. ... This spirit will show Medford and other schools that Klamath High can't be beaten."¹

It was unsettling to learn that the *Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds* omits all references to the white pelican's reputation for cleanliness and fighting spirit. Of course, the objectivity of the *Audubon Encyclopedia* is open to question since it also states that pelicans are "grossly proportioned"—having such large bodies and bills but such short legs—so that a pelican is "more like a caricature of a bird than a real one." And when you read that pelicans are said to "utter piglike grunts" and, on land, to "waddle about with a stately, dignified air" you have to wonder why the Audubon folks call themselves bird lovers.²

A Klamath Basin pelican may look ungainly with its big yellow bill, but in flight, these huge birds display a graceful power that makes sense in a school mascot.

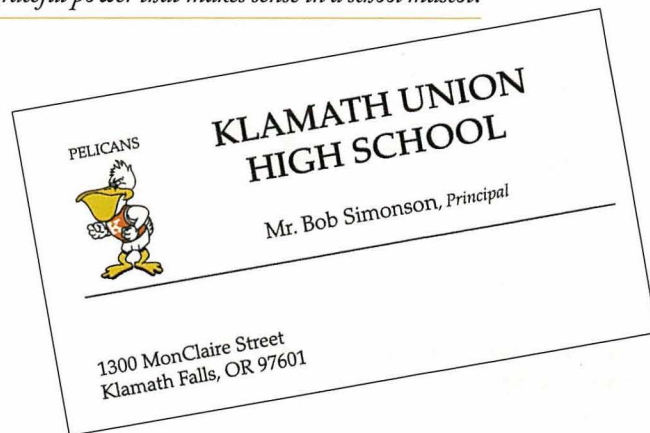


PHOTO BY BOB ANDERSON

Mature white pelicans have a horn on their upper bills during breeding season.

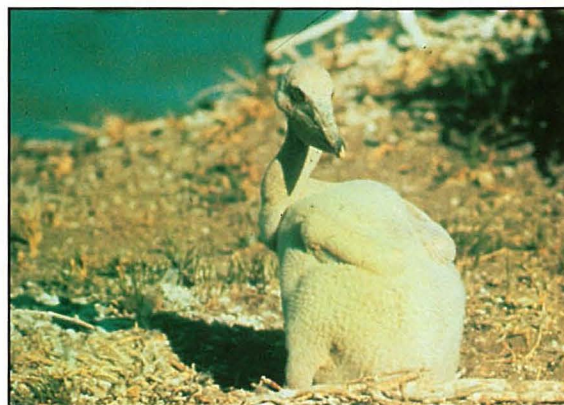


PHOTO BY BOB ANDERSON

A young, downy white pelican.

Jim Johnson, the K.U. athletic director from 1957 to 1982, said, "We weren't poked too much about being Pelicans." He did recall, though, that more than thirty years ago, before the new sportsmanship rules were adopted, Roseburg fans sometimes took a dead, plucked chicken, tied a rope around its neck, looped the rope over a rafter and yanked the plucked chicken up and down while chanting "Pluck the Pelicans."³

I'll bet those Roseburg fans didn't know that the American white pelican is the second largest bird in North America and one of the largest birds anywhere. Personally, I think white pelicans fly more gracefully than eagles, for the pelicans' eight- to nine-foot wingspan lets them soar to tremendous heights with apparent ease.⁴ When flying, pelicans draw their heads back onto their shoulders, rest their bills on their folded necks and flap their huge wings with slow, powerful wingbeats. They look beautifully primordial, like tailless pterodactyls. Don't forget that pelicans have been pelicans long before man became man. Pelicans have changed little in the last thirty million years; they didn't change because they didn't need to.⁵

To be even-handed, I'm including the following story told to me by Class of 1945 K.U. graduate Bill Meade. Before the Klamath-Medford football game in 1944, when the Medford High School team was still known as the Tigers, a float in the parade down Main Street in Medford carried a sign that read: "The tiger and the pelican went to a game. The tiger ate the pelican, now isn't that a shame." Medford won the game, 21-0 and went on to win the state football championship. The following year, the Medford team won its football games by such wide margins (54-0 against Klamath) that an *Oregonian* sports writer compared them to a great "black tornado," and the Medford High team adopted that name.⁶

Back to pelicans. From a fish's perspective, white pelicans must seem like aggressive predators that hunt in packs. Unlike coastal brown pelicans that plunge from the air into saltwater to capture fish, white pelicans fish cooperatively while swimming on the surface. In fact, they are among only a handful of birds that practice true cooperative feeding. Flotillas of swimming white pelicans fan out to form a semicircle; then, with a commotion of flapping and splashing, they herd fish into shallow water and scoop them up in their big bill pouches.⁷

Most high schools in Oregon, like those in the rest of the country, pick as their school symbol and team name an animal renowned for fighting, rather than an indigenous animal with local significance. One exception is the beaver of Beaverton High School, locally significant because early nineteenth-century commerce in the fur of the abundant beaver gave Oregon the nickname, the Beaver State. The K.U. pelican is another, significant because white pelicans are so uncommon elsewhere; in fact, the federal government lists them as a "sensitive species" because they have so few other suitable breeding sites left. In the Rogue Valley, white pelicans are virtually never seen, except for the commercial logo of Klamath First Federal Savings and Loan Association, and that logo was adopted only because the bank started in Klamath Falls, where white pelicans are common.

While brown pelicans mingle with people on the seashore, their bigger white cousins are reclusive, seeking out nesting sites on remote islands on inland lakes—places such as Lower Klamath Lake south of Klamath Falls.⁸ When the Audubon Society's western field representative, William Finley, visited Lower Klamath Lake in 1905 he found a multitude of pelican rookeries on floating tule islands: a total of from 4,000 to 9,000 white pelicans, one

of the biggest breeding colonies anywhere.⁹

White pelicans have a long history in the Klamath Basin. In 1866, Captain Oliver C. Applegate named a bay on Upper Klamath Lake "Pelican Bay" because of the congregations of white pelicans found there.¹⁰ Pelican Butte, which rises to 8,036 feet northwest of Pelican Bay, also takes its name from white pelicans, as does the ski area proposed for the butte.

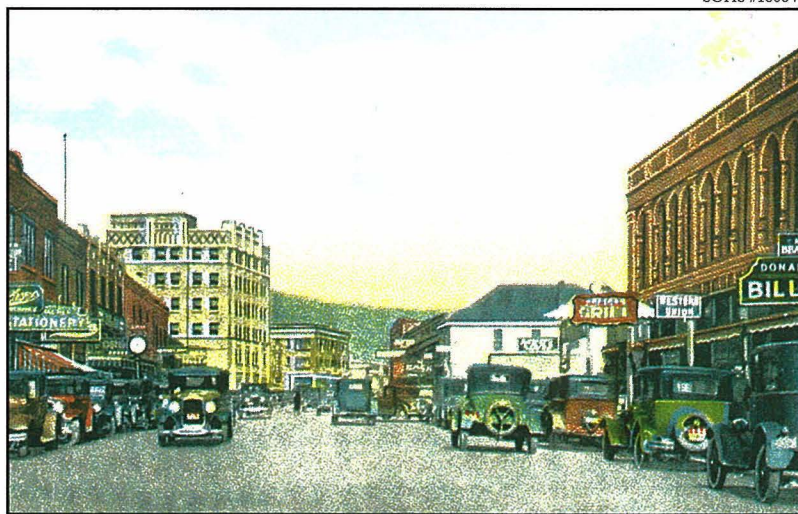
According to the 1929 K.U. yearbook, a white pelican was chosen as the school's mascot because of the beauty of pelicans flying over Upper Klamath Lake and because of their "important bearing" on such well-known local businesses as the White Pelican Hotel,¹¹ which was the fanciest hotel in town in the 1920s.¹²

While only one business was listed under "pelican" in the 1920 Klamath Falls City Directory—Pelican Bay Lumber Company—by 1930 there were fifteen listings, including the Pelican Theater, Pelican Garage, Pelican City Bakery, Pelican Auto Wrecking and Junk Company, Pelican Grill, Pelican Pool Hall, and Pelican Motors.¹³ Since then, "pelican" has been incorporated into the names of a host of different Klamath Falls businesses, everything from a school to a barbershop to a laundry to a V.F.W. Post. There was once even a "Pelitorium Cleaners and Tailors."¹⁴

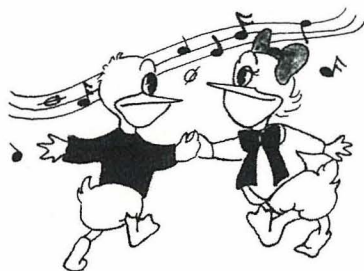
The wide adoption of the white pelican as a commercial logo by Klamath Falls businesses in the 1920s was an expression of local pride during a time of prosperity when a major logging boom stimulated the local economy. The K.U. students selected a white pelican as their mascot in the fall of 1928 when their school moved into a fancy, new building.¹⁵

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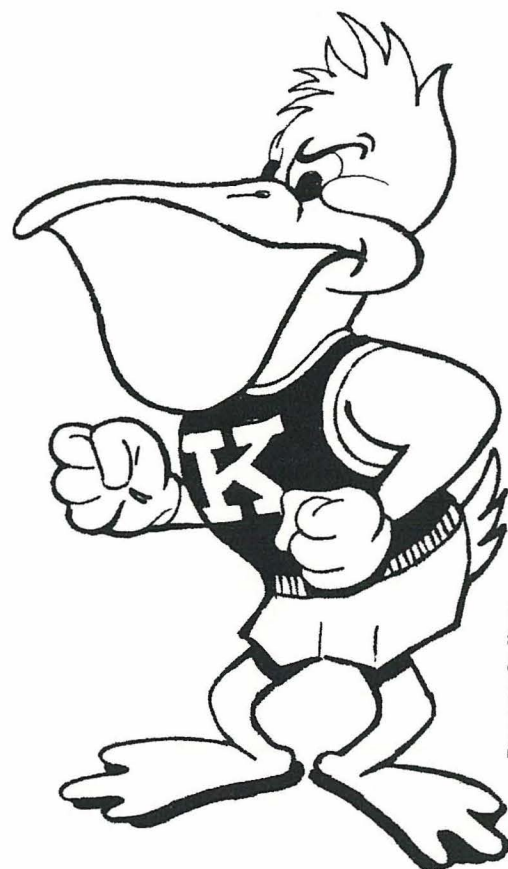
Klamath Falls' Main Street in the old days, with the Pelican Grill on the right.



These pelicans from 1946 and 1948 Klamath Union High School yearbooks—perhaps inspired by comic strips—look a lot like Donald Duck.



DRAWING COURTESY OF KLAMATH UNION HIGH SCHOOL



DRAWING BY JIM KURTH

The Pelican Pete Logo

Initially, K.U. yearbooks depicted Pelican Pete with simple but realistic line drawings of pelicans. In 1946, student cartoonist Ted Reeves drew clever pelican cartoons in the yearbook depicting a character he called “Pel.”¹⁶ In the 1950s, when K.U. had a long series of winning wrestling teams, the wrestlers designed their own, more aggressive-looking pelican logo and painted it on a big, plywood oval. Dressed in wrestling shorts, this pelican had a sharp, threatening bill—“sort of like a cardinal”—and uncompromising, flinty eyes.

According to K.U. Boys Athletic Director Barry Gottula, from the late 1960s through the eighties, the official Pelican Pete logo was a “nice to meet you, I won’t hurt you” pelican that looked “warm, friendly and inviting.” Student athletes began to complain about having to wear uniforms with a pelican logo that looked like “it didn’t want to fight”; they wanted one that would “strike fear into the hearts of opponents.”¹⁷

The Pelican Booster Club, a parents’ group, as well as students and Gottula, lobbied to replace the old, friendly logo. This caused a flap because traditionalists didn’t want to abandon the familiar image of Pelican Pete. In the fall of 1991 the radicals prevailed, and the Booster Club president asked Jim Kurth, a local commercial artist, to design a new Pete logo, giving him as an example a student drawing of a pelican with big, bulging biceps. Kurth, who was known for his clever drawings when we were classmates at K.U., has operated his own sign-painting business for twenty-five years; more importantly, he had already designed a pelican logo for the city Parks Department in the 1980s.¹⁸ His new, no-nonsense “fighting” Pelican Pete logo now appears on the uniforms of all K.U. sports teams, with appropriate variations: the swim team’s pelican has water dripping off its body; the football team’s pelican carries a football under its arm.¹⁹

Above is the old “friendly” version of the Klamath Union High School logo. At right is the new Fighting Pelican logo featuring a bird with attitude. The phenomenon of developing more aggressive mascot logos isn’t limited to high schools; Oregon State University recently discarded its time-honored friendly beaver logo in favor of a scowling beaver more likely to win football games.