



Photo from near the corner of SW 11 ST and SW Washington looking northeast, circa 1906. Prominent buildings include Central School now Central Park, the Court House, the Episcopal Church now the Arts Center at 7<sup>th</sup> and Madison, and the train depot now at SW 7<sup>th</sup> and Washington.

## Corvallis Chronicles from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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December 20, 2022

<https://nwotegroeg.wordpress.com>



## Introduction

In the summer of 2020 when I discovered that the Benton County Library had provided site licenses to the Corvallis Gazette Times and Ancestry.com archives, I began looking into the history of certain houses in my neighborhood south of Central Park. Eventually I expanded this to include all the houses in a 13 ½ block area. I completed this project in August, 2021. Certain information from this initial study led to further investigations of people, buildings, and organizations from the formative years of Corvallis near the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – from about 1870 to 1920. As with the previous investigation, most of this information was derived from the archives of the Corvallis Gazette Times newspaper and its predecessors. The Corvallis Gazette Times originated in 1909 with the merger of two competing newspapers, the Corvallis Gazette (est. 1863) and the Corvallis Times (est. 1888). I initially attempted to augment this data with information from Newspapers.com however, that site does not include Portland newspaper issues more recent than 100 years ago. That data is available via Genealogybank.com. Almost all the pictures are from the OSU and Benton County Historical Society Archives. All the chapters presented herein along with the original set are available at <https://nwotegroeg.wordpress.com> and the Benton County Library web site.



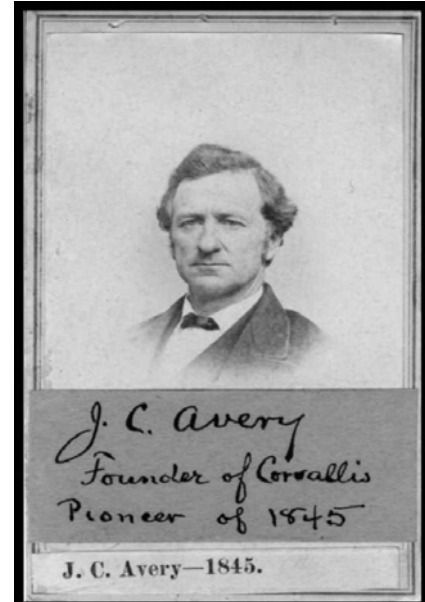
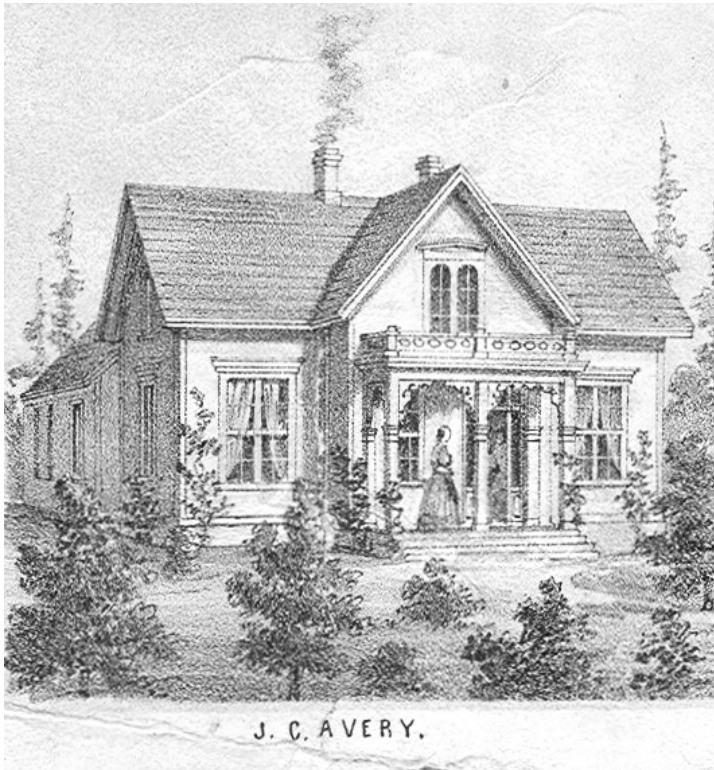
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## Chapter 1. A Virus, Nimbyism, and Arson: The Fate of the Founding Father's House

November 13, 2022



The Avery House: Kuchel and Dresel lithograph from 1859; Joseph Conant Avery (1817 - 1876); Martha Marsh Avery (1824-1911).

Joseph Conant Avery (1817 - 1876) was born in Pennsylvania and moved to Illinois in 1839. In 1841 he married Martha Marsh Avery (1824-1911). Mr. Avery traveled to Oregon in 1845 and staked out a 640-acre land claim near the confluence of the Mary's and Willamette Rivers. Avery was legally required to build a house to justify his claim and he hired Col. Cornelius Gilliam<sup>1</sup>, an old Indian fighter, and his son Washington Smith Gilliam, to construct a one-room log cabin during the winter of 1845-1846 near the Mary's River at the south end of his claim. It was the first such building in Corvallis and he paid Gilliam one cow for its construction (6/25/1908). His land claim constitutes much of the downtown area of present-day Corvallis and he is regarded as its founding father. Following the arrival of his wife and 3 children to Oregon by wagon train in 1847, he constructed a large frame dwelling that was completed in 1852 and the original log

cabin was torn down the next year. A lithograph of the Avery home from 1859 shows a structure that conforms to the footprint of the house present on the 1912 Sanborn map of the Avery homestead. It shows a 1.5 story front area with a gable roof and a front porch facing east that is perpendicular to a back 1-story area offset to the south with a shed roof. It was likely that the house was built in two stages, with the back part a later addition, but both were built before 1859. Based on the scale on the Sanborn map, the house was over 2700 square feet and other evidence suggested it had 8 to 10 rooms. Mr. Avery passed away in 1876 at age 59, but Mrs. Avery continued to live in the house for many years. The Averys had 13 children of whom seven survived both Mr. and Mrs. Avery. Their youngest child, Gertrude (1867-1954), was about 11 when Joseph passed away. She married Benjamin Franklin Irvine (1857-1940) in 1883 and they eventually lived on S. 8<sup>th</sup> St. But in 1907, the Irvines sold their house and moved in with Mrs. Avery. Subsequently, in 1908, B.F. Irvine who was a former mayor of Corvallis (1903-1905) and the editor and owner of the *Corvallis Times* sold the paper (9/4/1908) and became the associate editor and eventually editor of the *Oregon Journal* in Portland. The Irvine family along with Mrs. Avery moved to Portland in 1908 and her house was converted to a hospital that same year (9/11/1908) (see below).

**The Avery house (1908 – 1910): The Mary’s River Sanitarium**

Prior to 1908 Corvallis lacked a hospital. In that year, Isabelle Steward Smith, a nurse, leased the Avery Home and converted it to a 10-bed hospital called the Mary’s River Sanitarium. She was a graduate of the Good Samaritan Hospital, Portland, nursing program and later went abroad and visited hospitals in France, Germany and Austria and spend the winter of 1907-08 working in London. It was thought that the hospital would answer an immediate need as evidenced from the number of patients who previously had to be transported to nearby

**MARYS RIVER SANITARIUM, A MUCH  
NEEDED HOSPITAL, OPENED HERE**

**HOMESTEAD AT SOUTH SIDE OF CITY ON BANKS OF THE BEAUTIFUL  
MARYS RIVER JUST CONVERTED TO PURPOSE.**

**GOOD EQUIPMENT TO BE INSTALLED; NURSE AS MATRON**

**City’s Need in Way of Hospital to Be Supplied in a Small Way Until Such a  
Time as People See the Advisability of Erecting Greater Institution----  
Location is Ideal, and Sanitarium Has Endorsement of Local Physicians  
Who Hope That It Will Be Patronized.**

9/4/1909

hospitals in Albany, Salem and Portland. Miss Smith was assisted by her sister with the management of the hospital and two nurses Lavina Weldon and Emma Wintler, also joined the staff. The hospital was described as well-equipped and in such a beautiful location that it was ‘almost sufficient to induce some people to get sick, that they might have a vacation [there]’ (9/4/1909). In 1910 Dr. W.B. Johnson, who had been a patient suffering from a fever at the Sanitarium (3/28/1910), bought the B.R. Thompson residence at 2043 Monroe Ave. and leased it to the Mary’s River Sanitarium. This move doubled the number of beds to about 20 and the name was changed to the Corvallis General Hospital. However, what could be regarded as significant progress and a major advantage to the community was not without controversy as there was major resistance to the move of the sanitarium to the College Hill neighborhood. It was reported



that people 'in the vicinity are hopping mad at the suggestion of a hospital being located near them. They say it will be very unwelcome, more or less dangerous, a depressor of property values and will forever keep before them sights they do not care to see. It is insisted that there is no pleasure in watching a string of patients being brought to and taken away from a hospital, and they could bite nails in two as they dwell upon the thought of infectious diseases being brought into their community'. Lawyers were consulted and Dr. Withycombe even halted construction on the house he was building across the street from the proposed hospital (3/11,12/1910). Despite this, the move occurred and the controversy apparently did not negatively affect the relationship between Dr. Johnson and Isabelle Smith, the hospital administrator, as they were married in 1910. The new hospital was in great demand and patients came from all over the county. The interior was very modern and featured electric push buttons over each bed allowing the patient to call when any service is desired. Telephones were connected to each room (10/7/1910). As demand increased, the hospital outgrew the Thompson house and in 1920 funds were raised and a new hospital was constructed at N. 27<sup>th</sup> and Harrison that opened in January, 1922. Up to this time there were no ambulances and trucks were used to transport patients. Coinciding with the opening of the new hospital, the Corvallis Fire Department purchased an ambulance and started providing emergency patient transport in that year. By 1926, because of the volume of charity cases, the directors determined that the hospital was unlikely to succeed as a profitable institution and it was converted to a non-profit corporation (5/12/1937; 7/24/1937).

### **Contagion, quarantine, and pest houses.**

With a mortality rate of up to 30%, contagious diseases such as small pox were a constant threat to early residents of Corvallis and elsewhere. Based on newspaper reports, there were two approaches to prevent the spread of this disease. If the infected person was a member of a family, their residence and everyone in it was quarantined and the public was warned by a yellow flag installed at the house. Presumably the inhabitants were not allowed outside and food and other necessities were delivered to the residence. However, when the sick person was living and boarding in a hotel or a group living situation, then the person was isolated in a 'pest house' away from other people. The desire to have a permanent city-sponsored pest house was brought up occasionally in local news reports, but probably because of the infrequent nature of the outbreaks, one was never constructed. When confronted with a contagion, the authorities would attempt to come up with a suitable building as best they could. They would then try to find someone to assist the isolated sick person. In one instance, it was reported that a ' Mr. Breyer... offered his services [as a nurse]. He had been vaccinated many times and had been all round the disease without taking it. The services of Mr. Breyer were gladly accepted by the sheriff. He went out the cabin and was supplied with provisions and other necessities' (3/1/1902). Another example stated 'The pest house is occupied again'. The victim was Si Bradly, a Southern Pacific Railroad section foreman. His case was reported to the authorities and he was at once quarantined. He had 'roomed in the Hemphill building ... and boarded at Thrasher's and at both places there were numerous exposures. At both also, there has been a wholesale vaccination of those who were exposed, and sore arms will soon be numerous about town' (8/3/1904). Despite the apparent availability of vaccination, many citizens reacted with alarm and fear to the presence of pest houses. Another article described 'Renewed agitation is being

brought to bear upon the authorities to remove the city pest house from its present location ... Its position right by the side of the public road is a menace to the health of the community and if better precautions are not taken the city will be compelled to tear the old ... shack down and build one of larger dimensions ... The house is not more than 25 feet from the public highway... [In] This hot weather the doors and windows are standing wide open and millions of germs are carried out and scattered ... with every gust of wind ... When farmers see that yellow flag they put whip to their horse and sail past there like Pegasus on the wings of the wind. Some put cotton in their ears and nostrils, others tie up their heads with shawls or anything to escape the dread disease. Put the pest house somewhere else, over by the cemetery up on Marys' river, over in Linn county, on a shanty-boat or any old place just so it isn't where it is' (8/23/1904).

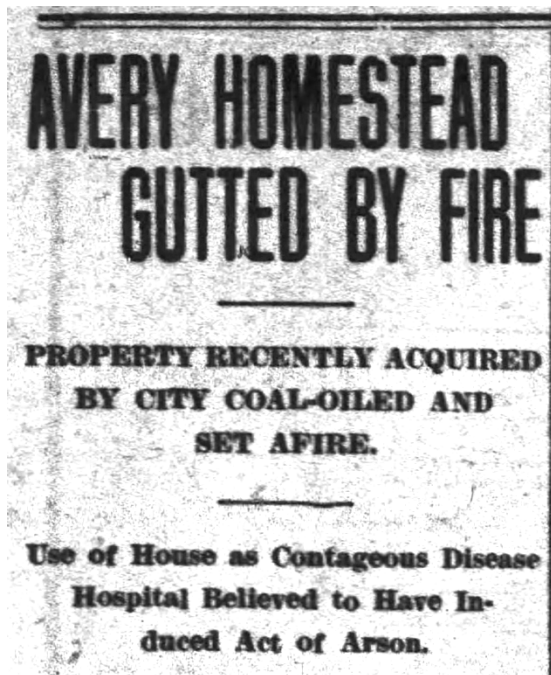
### **1915, The Avery House becomes the Corvallis Pest House**

The hospital vacated the Avery house in 1910 and it was then occupied by the A. J. Moore family for a few years. Mr. Moore was involved in organizing the Corvallis State Bank; Mrs. Moore hosted the 'Wednesday Afternoon Club' at the Avery house several times in 1914 (9/15/1914). In 1915, Corvallis voters by 613 to 540 supported the sale of \$7500 in bonds to purchase 12 acres including the Avery House for a city park and county fairgrounds (6/30/1915). The Moore family had left and there was some interest by Martha Avery Fulton (the Avery's grand-daughter) and her husband Prof. John Fulton in moving the Avery house to a lot on S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street because of its historic significance (11/12/1915). However, before that could happen, a young lady living in Waldo Hall at the college came down with smallpox. Dr. Bosworth, in his role as the city health officer, checked out several vacant houses and decided that they would use the now city-owned Avery house to quarantine the patient. There was a protest presented to the city council by nearby residents, but the council decided that Dr. Bosworth had made the correct decision. As described below, as a likely direct result of this decision, the Avery House was subjected to arson attacks on two occasions, the final one resulting in its complete destruction.

### **The Avery House destroyed by arson**

#### **1915: The first fire**

In late 1915 after the individual with smallpox had recovered and the house thoroughly fumigated the public health officials were considering moving the one-story part of the building to some other location and maintain it for use of contagious diseases. However, before that could happen in mid-November a fire was discovered well underway at about 8 PM and emitting volumes of black smoke reeking of kerosene. By the time the fire department arrived, the fire had spread to all the upstairs rooms of the house and broken through to the attic and out through the roof. Shortly after the arrival of the fire department, four young men were observed near the back of the house throwing stones at upstairs windows. The one they had succeeded in breaking provided a strong draft to support the spread of the fire upstairs. It was concluded that the fire was started on purpose as just inside the back door an empty 5-gallon oil can was found. The burn pattern indicated that the kerosene had been splashed on the door panels and stair steps as the lower four or five steps were completely destroyed. It was thought that the accelerant was spread up the stairs and into the attic of the house.



11/12/1915



5/15/1916

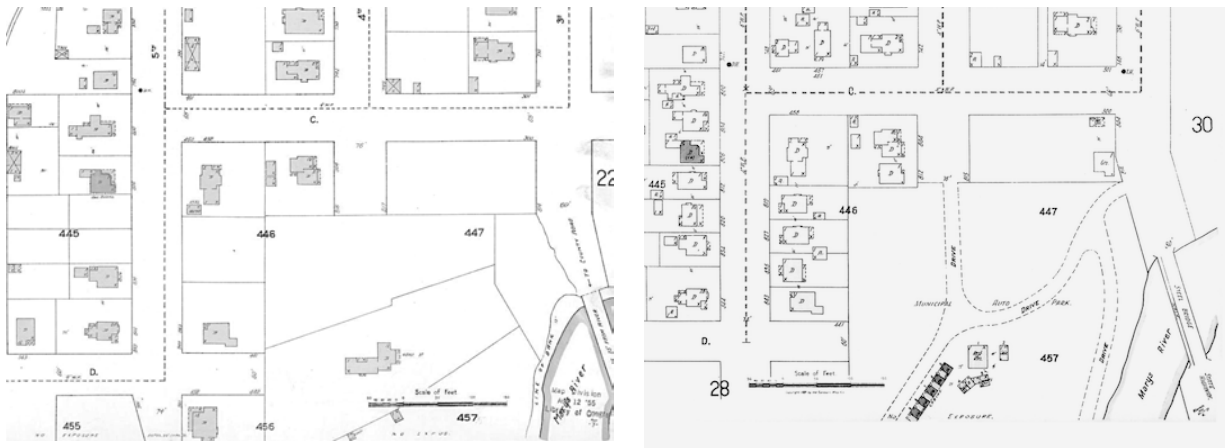
### **1916: The second fire.**

The burned-out house became the home to what were then called 'tramps' and what are now called 'homeless people'. At 4:30 PM one afternoon in mid-May the fire department was called for another fire at the house. It had apparently been burning for some time and the firemen could not save the property. All that was left were the charred embers and two tall chimneys. This second fire was also thought to be arson as the fire was burning in several different locations in the house when it was discovered. Some suggested that it had been set by the tramps, but Mayor Porter did not believe that. He stated 'They don't do that kind of business. It was a place of refuge for them ... and the fire gained such headway and was burning in several places when discovered'.

### **Subsequent development of the Avery Homestead: a park, a car park with camping, and cabins.**

As was planned when the area was purchased for a park, between 1919 and 1924 a variety of improvements to accommodate visitors was added. The area near the Avery Homestead site was modified for camping and there were canoes for rent, a swimming area, fire pits for cooking, piped in water, a laundry building, a rest room area with toilets and showers facilities, rocking chairs, reading tables, electric lights, phone service, and afternoon and evening caretakers. The location was described as follows: 'The grounds on the bank of the Mary's river were last year an oasis fairer than any, said many of those who in coming thru had stopped at the camping grounds both north and south of us' (6.2.1919). By 1921 there were 40 cars per day and in the summer of 1924 the park hosted a total of over 16,000 visitors. In 1925, five bungalows in city auto park camp were constructed using hollow tile which was extolled for their admission of air that cooled the buildings in the hot summer weather. The cabins came with stoves, drop tables, bed springs,

and electric lights (4/9/1925). Rent was \$1.25 which included free use of wood and water. In 1930, it was reported that 'Automobile tramps are numerous this year. Cars loaded with families in dire need of food, clothing and gasoline. Many are hopeless victims of the lure to greener pastures, having left meager homes elsewhere and are in Oregon to try and better their condition. They present a real problem. The Chamber of Commerce is not much interested in the auto park any more' (8/7/1930). In 1932, it was reported that there were few eastern tourists. Possibly due to economic conditions little information was provided about the park with the last mention in the local paper being in 1940 suggesting that it shut-down during the war years. In 1953 a contest of sorts was held to name several city parks. The names suggested for the Avery homestead were Pioneer Park, Memorial Park, Park of the Pioneers and Marysville Park (12/4/1953). Subsequently it was announced that Pioneer Park was chosen (2/9/1954). It is not clear what happened to the park cabins. However, although their hollow clay tile construction was extolled for their air conditioning effects, that type of block was very fragile and prone to breakage and it is unlikely that they could have been moved. They were likely demolished sometime in the 1940s. It was reported that a demolition permit was issued for the old Pioneer Park building on 4<sup>th</sup> in 1959 (5/25/1959) for the construction of the SW 4<sup>th</sup> on ramp to Philomath Blvd. heading west towards Philomath. This ramp required a huge amount of fill that covered most of the Avery Homestead area. To compensate for the destruction of the Avery Homestead part of Pioneer Park all property along Highway 20 from 15th Street to the SP tracks was obtained for park use. Much of this property is on the South side of the highway including the baseball diamond west of the train trestle (3/10/1959).



Sanborn Maps of the Avery Homestead area. Left, 1912 map showing the Avery house at the bottom right area. Right, 1927 map showing the park cabins and other structures located near where the Avery house had been located.

**A complementary development adjacent to the auto park.**

The Auto Park Store had been located adjacent to the auto park off 3<sup>rd</sup> street at the north end of the approach to the bridge and served the visitors to the park. By 1926, Ed Fehler purchased the Store and by 1930 had built the first of several small bungalows with garages near his store off 3<sup>rd</sup> street and parallel to C Avenue and named them and the store the Wa-Wona Court Store and Wa-Wona Court Motel. The complex included the bungalows, a market with a lunch fountain, and a service station and Mr. Fehler owned them until he passed away in 1949. The name was changed to the Patio Motel in about 1954. Bill and Nadine Palmer bought the Patio Motel in about 1976. It received some notoriety in 1983 when in a report entitled 'Your Stay Can Be So Suite' by Carla Cassell, it was described as the only lodging in Corvallis that would rent for less than an evening. For \$19.08 you could have a room for three hours with or without adult movies (8/25/1983). In 1989 the State of Oregon purchased the motel as part of the right of way of the Corvallis bypass. Part of the complex of buildings was demolished, but Rod Terry, a local designer, organized for a house plus a cabin repurposed as a garage to be moved to 1190 SW Sunset Dr. and for the other cabins to be moved to 19<sup>th</sup> and College in Philomath.



The Wa-Wona Court motel was adjacent to Pioneer Park and provided additional accommodation, a market, and gas station. Top is a postcard from 1931. With the construction of the Corvallis bypass and new bridges over the Mary's River in 1989, these cabins were moved to 19<sup>th</sup> and College streets in Philomath (below).

## The end

By the construction of the SW 4<sup>th</sup> Street on ramp in 1959 and Corvallis Bypass starting in 1989, the destruction of the Avery Homestead was complete. If one travels on the Pioneer Park bike path among the forest of highway pilings, between the roar of passing semis overhead, and amid the debris of homeless camps, one can experience ever so briefly the tranquility that the native peoples, the Averys, hospital patients, and auto park visitors enjoyed for so many years. The lone remnants of the location's past history that somehow survived are a couple of walnut trees reportedly planted by Mr. Avery in 1875, the year before he died. The most prominent one stands next to the SW 4<sup>th</sup> street on ramp to Philomath Blvd (11/21/1988).



The remnants of the Avery Homestead. Top left shows the huge pile of fill that was deposited on top of the Avery Homestead location in 1959 when the SW 4<sup>th</sup> Street on ramp to Philomath Blvd. was constructed. The train track underpass and trestle across the Mary's River are also shown. This picture was taken during the flood of 1964. Top right, a walnut tree reportedly planted by J. C. Avery in 1875 next to the SW 4<sup>th</sup> street on ramp to Philomath Blvd. Below shows an area near the location of the Avery Homestead in Pioneer Park.

## References

<sup>1</sup>Gilliam (1798 - 1848) had a land claim near Dallas, OR in Polk County and led the prosecution of the Cayuse War after the Whitman Massacre. He was accidentally shot and killed on his way back home to Oregon. Gilliam County is named after him.

All dates in brackets refer to issues of the Corvallis Gazette Times or its predecessors.





September 29, 2022

### The fire of 1869 and the beginnings of the Corvallis Fire Department (CFD)

Early in the morning of Wednesday July 21, 1869 a fire swept through the heart of downtown Corvallis and destroyed almost a city block including at least 19 structures valued at \$40,000. As the newspaper reported 'the best business portion of our beautiful city is laid in waste - and those handsome shade trees - which no hand of art can replace - are charred and blackened stems'. The next day in a letter 'To the Citizens of Corvallis', the Mayor, George P. Wrenn, called on them to organize a fire company and purchase a fire engine (7/24/1869)<sup>1</sup>. Corvallis, founded in 1846, had a fire company a decade later, but by 1863, the company had fallen into debt, was bailed out the city council with an appropriation of \$50, and its equipment was turned over to the city, and it was disbanded<sup>2</sup>. It was not until three years after the 1869 fire and Mayor Wrenn's appeal that on June 18, 1872, a new fire company was organized as Corvallis; Engine Company No. 1 with 26 members and Mr. Wrenn as Foreman<sup>2</sup>. A few months later the name was changed to Young America Engine Company No. 1 (YEAC). Fund raising began, initially with a notice in a newspaper for a

#### **To the Citizens of Corvallis.**

**CORVALLIS, July 22, 1869.**

**EDITOR GAZETTE:** As we have just had in our city the most destructive fire which Corvallis has ever witnessed; in which our citizens have lost some \$40,000, and are still at a great loss for want of suitable places for business, and all, no doubt, the work of an incendiary, it is just and right that every citizen should use every means in their power to assist in ferreting out and bringing to justice the guilty let them be whom they may. I would call upon our citizens, as they value their lives and property, to go at work immediately and see that our city shall be better protected by the presence of a fire engine. A very small per cent. of the late loss would have bought a good fire engine. All of our citizens are aware that the City Council are limited in their means, so that they can do but little in that direction. Some of our prominent citizens called my attention to the necessity of a fire company. If our citizens would raise most of the cash, I would think it advisable for an appropriation. We have the tools for a hook and ladder company, but without a regular organized company they are of no use, as has been demonstrated in the two last fires we have had. It certainly is time our citizens should arouse themselves for the protection of their lives and property. Let us lose no time.

**GEO. P. WRENN, Mayor.**

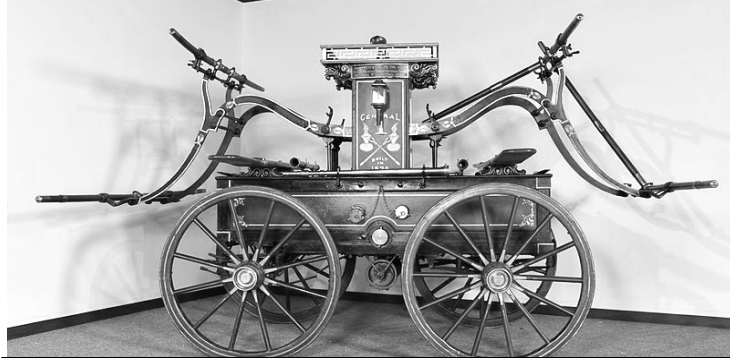
'STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL ... under the auspices of the City Council for the benefit of the Fire Department of Corvallis' with the hope of raising 'several hundred dollars to procure cisterns, hose, engine house, bell, etc.' (6/8/1872). This was followed by an ad for another fund raiser, a Grand Ball, given by the Fire Department on Nov. 27, 1872 (11/22/1872). A Masquerade Ball in 1883 was the most profitable up to that time and raised \$65.50 (3/2/1883).

After its first year, the Foreman's Annual Report indicated that Mr. Wrenn had been re-elected Foreman and the activity over the past year included three fires: the first was on July 3, 1872 in which a house, smith shop and contents burned with an estimated loss of \$2000. This 'happened before there was a fire engine in the city.' The second fire was on January 18, 1873

and involved Purdy's wagon shop and Manuel Knight's smith shop and a large amount of coal and incurred combined losses of about \$3500. It was reported that 'Owing to the want of hose the Fire Company could not play on the buildings that were destroyed, but they saved the Brewery, with about 1000 bushels of barley - all estimated at \$2,500'. The third fire occurred on March 29, 1873 and destroyed the City Hotel killing one guest. The new engine sprayed 'three streams, and during the entire fire did most effective service'(4/5/1873). The report stated: 'There is no doubt that the engine saved ... \$10,000 worth of property, as all the buildings near the hotel would have [likely] caught fire (7/22/1873).

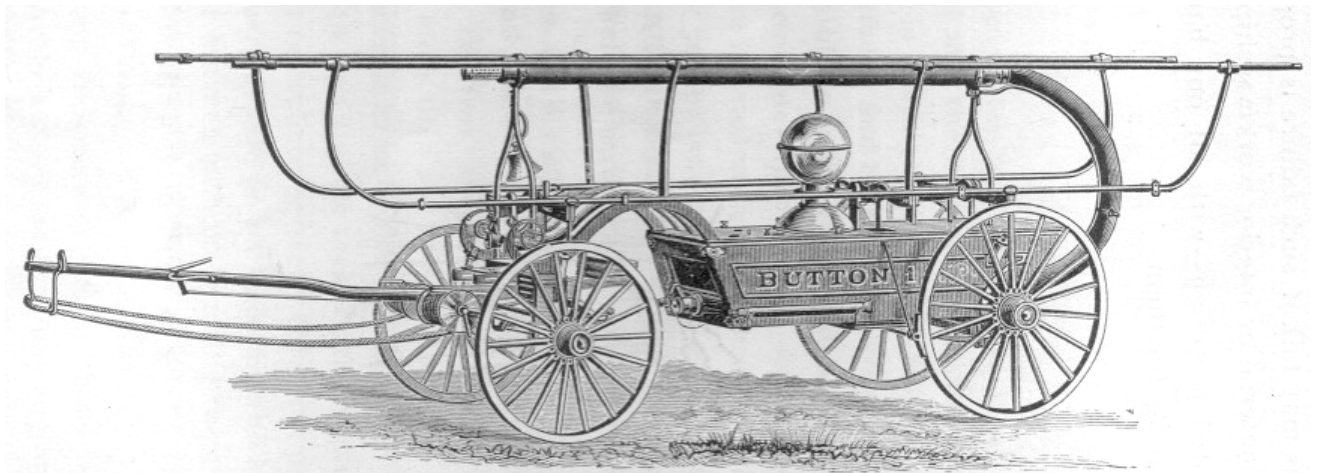
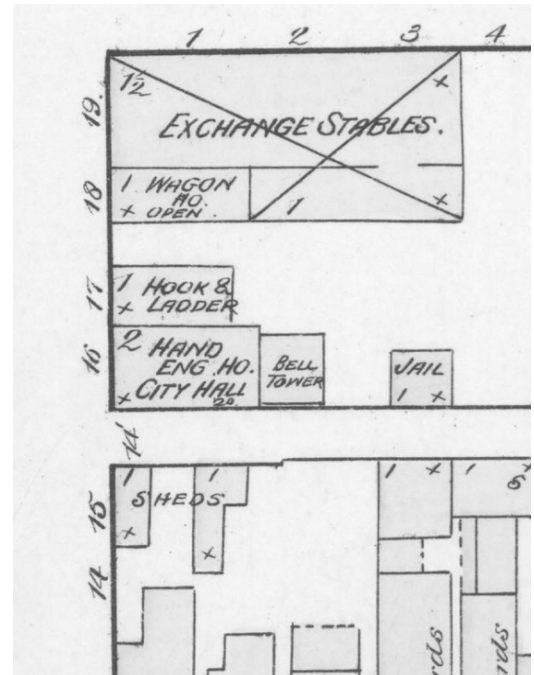
### **The Saga of Big Six: solid gold ornamentation?**

As described above, the CFD had an engine in early 1873 and it was used in the City Hotel fire. It was called 'Big Six' and was 'pre-owned' having been initially used by the San Francisco Fire Department as far back as 1855 and subsequently by Virginia City, NV, or vice versa, depending on the source. A report indicated that Mr. Wrenn traveled to San Francisco and then to



Double Deck/End Stroke Hand Pump. 1836. Missouri History Museum. "Big Six" may have been similar. An example of the use of this pump is shown in the following video.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8DUcyWTjT9Y>

Nevada looking for a suitable engine and eventually purchased one from Virginia City for about \$2000, 'provided it proved to be just as represented' (8/2/1872). Its arrival in Corvallis occasioned a grand parade in which it was featured on November 28, 1872<sup>2</sup>. It was described as a double decker hand engine (2/20/1904) and there is a record of a San Francisco fire engine of the Monumental Company 6 that was a John Rogers & Company, first class, double deck model made in 1854. Big Six could throw four streams of water and had a sprinkler on top that could spray the men manning the pump when they were near the fire (1/3/1916). Shortly after its arrival in Corvallis, the City Council received a bill from Virginia City for \$800 (probably a final payment), but agreed only to pay \$500 possibly because the machine was not as represented (3/15/1873); Big Six required major repairs a few months later (5/24/1873). Big Six's use in Corvallis was short lived; it was described as 'a very nice engine only it was too heavy for Corvallis requiring at the very least 60 men to work it' (10/26/1888). Another report stated that it was 'far too heavy to use on the slushy streets'<sup>4</sup>. It was replaced in 1879 and then stored in an old shed on 3<sup>rd</sup> street, supposedly to be manned by the Monumental Engine Company (11/2/1883), but it fell in to disuse and reportedly served as a hen roost and boys scratched their initials on its grease covered surface. A group of retired firemen from San Francisco who had served with Big Six during its time there wanted to restore the machine and offered Corvallis \$100 which was accepted (10/26/1888) and it was shipped to California. When it was being refurbished, it was discovered that the plates bearing her name and several ornaments were made of gold and valued at \$300 or more. One article indicated that it was originally built for Virginia City, NV in 1856 'at a time when gold was plentiful. The engine was built regardless of cost and with the object ... of making it the finest engine on the coast' (7/3/1891). One may be somewhat skeptical



The Corvallis Fire Department in 1884 was located on the North side of Madison between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> ST. Clockwise from top: Lithograph from *West Shore* magazine (1884) showing the two fire station buildings (Hook & Ladder, Hand Engine and City Hall), the bell tower, and a fire engine and hose cart. Sanborn map showing Hook and Ladder building (1 story) and Engine House and City Hall (2 stories), bell tower and jail; a hand engine similar to the L. Button & Son Hand Engine #2 that the CFD purchased in 1879 for \$1400 and shown in the lithograph above. The curved pipe called a 'squirrel tail' was for sucking water from a source such as a cistern.

of this because another source indicates that the Virginia City Fire Companies were not formed until after 1861<sup>5</sup>. There are other reports of the engine's gold trim, although they may be repeating information from the original article (12/19/1896; 1/3/1916). A few years after its sale a person from Corvallis visited San Francisco and reported that 'All the parts of the old fire fighter have been burnished and she shines with resplendency that dazzles the eye of the onlooker. She

stands in the center of a well kept room...old volunteers gather frequently and tell of the times ...when Big Six was the champion engine on the coast....It was at Virginia City, in the old golden days that she...broke the coast record ... with a throw of 227 feet' (12/19/1896). From this, it is not clear whether Big Six was originally purchased by Virginia City and then sold to San Francisco or vice versa. Unfortunately, Big Six is not part of the current San Francisco Fire Museum so it is not clear what happened to it.

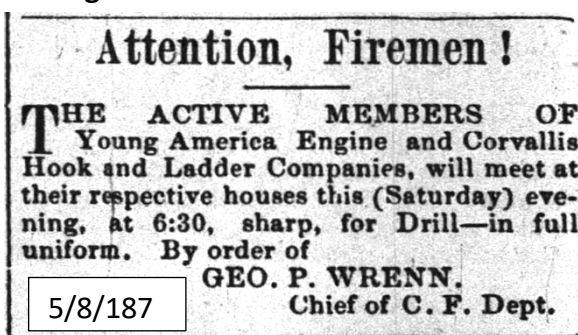
### 1875-1879: A Hook and Ladder Company and a new engine

In January of 1875 an organizational meeting was called to start a Hook and Ladder (H&L) Company; 22 people agreed to become members (1/23/1875). The purpose of a H&L wagon was to provide tall ladders to access the upper stories and roofs of tall buildings for rescue and firefighting. The hook was for pulling down walls to create fire breaks, but it is not clear how often they were used. In the 1875

annual report to the City Council the Young America Engine Company (YAEC) No.1 was manned by 67 volunteers and a H&L Company by 28 men. Why were so many men needed? The hand engine was very heavy and was pulled by the firefighters to the site of the fire and would require extra effort if the streets were muddy or rutted. A double decker machine similar to Big Six made in 1850 by Young & Son of Philadelphia, required 16 firefighters to operate its pump - eight men on the ground and another eight on foldout platforms atop its main body and they would pull/push the pump handles up and down to pressurize a vessel that propelled the water stream. This was exhausting work and they worked in shifts. That might occupy 40 men, plus others were needed to direct the water stream and to keep the tub full of water. The hook and ladder team would require fewer men. During the previous year they had attended two fires, with no damage caused to either structure.

In 1879, Big Six was replaced with an L. Button & Son Hand Engine #2 for \$1400 (1/31/1879). The engine weighed 3500 pounds and was pulled to the fire by teams of firefighters who would then line up along the sides of the pumper and raise and lower the long handles (called brakes) that were stored parallel to the top of the engine. This would pressurize the brass tank which then propelled a steady stream of water through a hose. The longest stream of water thrown by this engine was over 200 feet. For a description on how this machine worked and why they required so many men see the following 1-minute video.

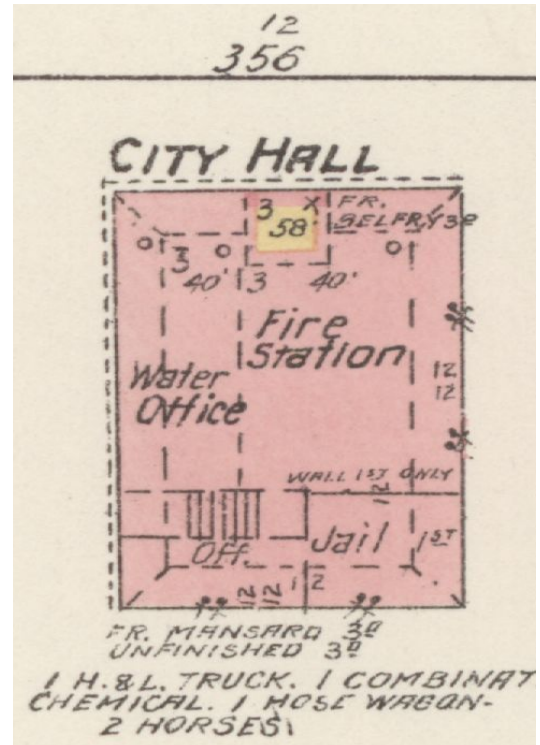
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4CFaw\\_J38U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4CFaw_J38U)



### CFD 1880 – 1899. A new fire station

As seen in the picture and map from 1884, the CFD was located on Madison between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> ST. The H&L company had a one-story building adjoining a two-story structure housing the engine with a meeting room/office above. Behind was a 50' bell tower and behind that off the alley was the jail. The bell tower was used to dry fire hoses (10/31/1905). In 1892, a 3-story combination city hall fire station, jail and offices at 356 Madison Avenue was constructed. A picture and Sanborn map<sup>3</sup> of the building are shown below. In 1930 a new fire station was

constructed behind building such that it faced 4<sup>th</sup> St and the old building was used as the city hall. In 1957, a new fire station was constructed at 4<sup>th</sup> and Van Buren (5/23/1957) and in 1958, the old buildings were demolished (8/12/1958).



Corvallis City Hall, Fire Station, Jail at 356 Madison Avenue. It was completed in 1892 and demolished in May of 1958. Left: Post Card ca. 1909. Right: 1912 Sanborn map indicating the fire station included a Hook and Ladder truck, a combination Chemical engine and hose wagon, and two horses.

**Volunteer firemen.** When the CFD was started in 1872, although the fires could have serious consequences, their frequency was limited to between 2 and 4 per year into the late 1880s (7/12/1873, 5/21/1875, 4/15/1887). By 1908 there were about 14 fires/yr followed in 1911 by 24 (9/8/1911), 73 in 1919 (1/7/1920), and 118 in 1929 (1/22/1930). Because initially there were so few fires, the hiring of professional firemen was not financially feasible. Therefore, for many years, all firemen were unpaid volunteers. In many rural areas this is still the arrangement and even today a few volunteers assist in manning Corvallis fire houses. The lack of activity has been mitigated by combining fire department duties with emergency medical services. Corvallis obtained its first ambulance in 1922 and it was located at the fire department (4/17/1922). This arrangement has continued to this day such that currently over 75% of the CFD service calls are

for medical emergencies and many firemen have paramedical training. How did the original fire companies encourage young men to volunteer for such a strenuous and dangerous activity? Initially, firemen were organized into companies that were somewhat independent of the city government and it was regarded as a privilege to be a member; volunteers were required to pay dues, and members were responsible for the purchase of their uniforms that included a hat, belt, red jacket with black velvet cuffs and collar, and dark pants. Those who failed to purchase a complete uniform were not permitted to take part in parades (12/20/1893). Because actual fires were so infrequent, their main activity was to practice and this probably led to comradery and the fire companies became similar to social clubs or fraternal organizations. Yearly competitive tournaments showcasing fire-fighting skills were held with other Willamette Valley fire departments would have further strengthened the bonds among the firemen. However, the lack of pay and the independence of the companies meant that the city had limited control of the firemen and volunteer fire companies often were notorious for being more like ungovernable social clubs. Some cities had competing fire companies that sometimes fought each other rather than the fire. In Corvallis, there were several companies, including the Hook & Ladder (H & L), Young America Engine Co. (YAEC), and the Monumental Hose Company. An example of a minor conflict in Corvallis is as follows: The YAEC decided they wanted to have a brass band. However, previously when the H & L Co had a band, YAEC objected to their practicing in the firemen's hall, so the board established a rule that no brass bands could practice in the hall so YAEC band had to find a different place where they could practice (1/7/1898). There were also conflicts over finances with the City Council which was mainly concerned with fire protection and insurance rates, whereas many of the volunteers may have been more interested in the social aspects of dress uniforms, parades, tournaments, bands, and balls. These conflicts and problems led to a continuing instability of fire protection in Corvallis over many years. Who got the money that was raised and whether it was used for needed equipment or social events was probably of ongoing concern and likely contributed to the elimination of the fire companies and consolidation into one CFD in 1900 (8/15/1900; 8/17/1900).

The problems with volunteer firemen and other information about early fire departments is covered in the following 10 min video from the Walla Walla Fire Department.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10-2mNVEObU>

### **CFD 1895-1909: Disbanded, reorganized, abandoned, non-functional, resurrected.**

It was reported in 1895 that, whereas the H.& L. Co., was in fair shape, the Young American Engine company was practically disbanded (2/21/1895). As indicated above, in 1900 there was a complete reorganization in which the fire companies were disbanded and reorganized under a single head to be known as the CFD with a new constitution and bylaws (8/15/1900; 8/17/1900). However, by 1903, the newspaper reported that 'the department is in bad condition. There are only ten or a dozen men who are really active firemen, and they are discouraged. ...The department has visions of disbanding' (9/16/1903). This was followed by an article in 1904 stating 'Corvallis has no organized fire department. The late organization has been completely abandoned, and there is no individual that makes claim that he is a fireman. There have been no meetings of the department for three or four months, and those who [had been] members deny that there is a department or that they are members'. This caused major concern by the City Council over the potential of soaring insurance rates (1/13/1904) and led to a large number of

citizens and firemen meeting and developing plans to revitalize the department and make certain that it be composed only of members willing to turn out at every alarm (1/22/1904). Francis Patrick Sheasgreen, who was the co-owner of the Central Planing Mill and Box Factory, had been fire chief from 1900 -1904. He was replaced in 1904 by Alex Rennie and then later that year by J.K. Berry (2/3/1904; 9/9/1904). However, Mr. Berry left town in 1906 and by 1909 the department was in disarray again. John F. Allen, the president of the Fire Department stated 'there is no fire department. Certain apparatus is on hand, but fire fighters are few and far between and no longer of the disposition to serve the people for fun' (12/30/1909). Millard M. Long who was Fire Chief in 1908-1909 (4/16/1909) stated that 'it was a crime to ask men to get out of a warm bed and while half dressed run ten blocks to an engine house and then run ten blocks pulling heavy apparatus. That volunteers could be secured at one time was because of the social life connected with the Department. But there is no social life now' (12/30/1909). This long-term instability appeared to have finally been resolved with the election



Thomas R. Graham became Fire Chief in 1910 at age 27 and served for 21 years until he passed away in 1931.

of Thomas R. Graham (1883-1931) as fire chief (2/1/1910). He was a graduate in pharmacy from OAC and owned interests in drug stores in town and had been a volunteer fire fighter since about 1901. There may have been a tradition of fire fighting in his family as a Thomas Graham (1840-1896), who likely was his uncle, was treasurer of the fire company in 1879 (1/31/1879). In contrast to the previous chiefs, who served for a few years at most, T.R. Graham was chief from 1910 until he passed away in 1931. During this time he oversaw the transition of the department from machines pulled by firefighters, to the use of horse teams, and finally the mechanization of the department such that when he passed away the department had five motorized vehicles; two pumpers, a hose wagon, and a ladder truck, in addition to the city ambulance, and a new fire station. He was a hands-on Chief and it was reported at one time when the horse driver was off for dinner and an alarm came in, 'Chief Graham ...hitched [the horses] and was out of the fire station in a jiffy and broke the speed record on Monroe's paved street' (10/27/1911). He was described as a decorous man when on the job as a pharmacist, but out on the street directing the firemen language-wise his 'talk could curl up the flames' (3/14/1960). He served as President of both the Oregon Fire Chiefs Association and the Pacific Coast Fire Chiefs Association, and as Vice-President of the International Fire Chiefs Association (3/23/1931). He lived at 311 N 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 1910 and 1930 censuses which was a few blocks from the fire station on Madison. He married Nellie Witham in 1906 and they had two children but one, Artis, died in infancy. Also, he followed his father Richard Graham (1845 -1909) in the drug store business and inherited at least one store and owned all or part of a couple of others. In 1934, his wife Nellie was listed as the proprietor of Graham and Wortham Drug Store<sup>6</sup> suggesting that she may have assisted with that business during his lifetime. Therefore, he lived near the fire station, he may have been somewhat

independent income-wise, he may not have had extensive family obligations, and his wife may have helped with his business all of which could have allowed him to devote so much time to the CFD. It is not clear why he died at age 48. He had been in ill health for several years and in early 1931 was operated on in Portland for 'adjustment of a displaced kidney' (1/9/1931). Another source<sup>7</sup> indicated that he died of a stroke after a tonsillectomy, but also that he had cardiorenal syndrome which is an acute disorder of heart and kidneys in which one causes the other to fail. He clearly was a skilled administrator and very popular with his colleagues. For his dedication and service to the CFD, the new fire station on 4<sup>th</sup> St. built in 1930 behind the old station on Madison Ave. was named in his honor.

### **The CFD, 1905-1906: A telephone-based alarm system and two sub-stations**

Despite the problems with the CFD during the early 20 Century, some advances did occur. In 1905, telephones were incorporated into a fire alarm system for a cost of \$200. It is not clear how this worked but there may have been a dedicated direct line from the telephone switch board to the Fire Station. In one instance it was reported that a fire was 'discovered by a resident ..., and ... quickly telephoned to the central office of the Independent telephone. Within ten seconds thereafter, the fire bell was ringing, and persons were hurrying to the engine house. Within three or four minutes the department was at the scene ...and the fire was extinguished' (5/17/1905).

Job's addition was incorporated into Corvallis in 1889 and comprised 31 blocks from 10th St to Kings Blvd and North of Tyler. In 1906, a new fire station and fire company of 25 volunteers was established for that area (9/11/1906). It was apparently the first CFD outpost away from the central station and was located at 1450 Harrison Ave. Based on the 1912 Sanborn map, it was a 12' x 16' building and contained a hose cart and 750' of 2 ½ " hose and had a bell on its roof. The fire station was eliminated in about 1918 with the advent of motorized fire trucks and the building was demolished in 1954 for the construction of a dental building (5/26/1954).

Following the Job's Addition station in 1909, another company was organized near the Union Depot (4/16/1909). A small building is designated on the 1912 Sanborn map at SW 10 and Washington as 'Hose Cart and 700' of hose' and the neighborhood was populated with fire hydrants at about 3-block intervals. It can be seen as a small lean-to type shed on the side of a building in a photograph taken about 1910. On the 1927 Sanborn map, the Union Depot had been moved to 120 S. 6<sup>th</sup> and the small substation was gone, probably because it was no longer necessary due to the mechanization of the CFD.

### **Payments to firemen**

Not only did volunteer firemen not get paid, but they also did not receive health care. This was evident in 1896 when a fireman, Sol Smith, was severely injured in a fall while fighting a fire; the CFD had to petition the City Council to pay for his treatment (1/28/1895) and it took them over a year to agree to pay the \$24 bill (4/11/1896). One of the major changes instituted during the period of turmoil occurred in 1903 when the city council voted to pay the fire chief \$1 and the firemen 50 cents/hr when they were fighting a fire (9/16/1903) with a limit of 10 men covered. Subsequently for a fire at a sawmill, the bill came to \$45.35 with James K. Berry, the fire chief receiving \$9.50 and the balance paid to 7 firemen who worked 9 to 10 hrs each as the 'fire was in lumber piles where the flames smouldered for many hours' (3/15/1905). However,



it is unclear how long this arrangement lasted. When the CFD started using horses in about 1910, they hired a man at \$60/mo to maintain and drive them. In 1913, according to the City Council meeting minutes, the fire chief started being paid \$40/mo. This was likely equivalent to half time as in the same report, the chief of police was receiving \$80/mo. With the purchase of motor vehicles after 1917, the CFD had at least two firemen on full time salary. They were the drivers of the new machines and received \$85 and \$80 /mo. and requested \$15 raises in 1919 (7/10/1919). Clearly, there was a big difference between the use of horses which many of the volunteers would have had extensive experience with and the new fire trucks which required care and training to drive safely. By 1938 there were 6 firemen on payroll and about 30 men total were showing up at each fire (1/3/1938). In 1945 the City Council decided the CFD Chief needed to be full time and agreed to pay the then Chief, Percy Tallman, \$200/mo (6/12/1945). By 1954, there were 12 paid firemen including the chief (7/7/1954). Today there are upwards of 80 salaried firemen along with 9 or so volunteers.

### **Financing the fire department**

Although the CFD was staffed by unpaid volunteers up until 1903 when the volunteers were paid an hourly rate when they were fighting fires, the equipment was not cheap. For example, Corvallis paid about \$2000 for a used 19-year-old pumper engine in 1873. In 1879 when they replaced this engine with a new L. Button & Son Hand Engine, the cost was almost \$1700 including shipping (1/31/1879). When the H&L company was founded, all members were required to donate 50 cents for the use of the company (1/22/1875). The Ladies Coffee Club was an organization started in 1883. They not only raised money to support the purchase of CFD equipment, but also would show up at fires, often in the middle of the night and provide the firemen with coffee and sandwiches as they sometimes fought a fire through the night (6/2/1911). They were sponsors of annual Firemen's Ball and other event to raise funds for the department. They also did other charitable work for OAC and were instrumental in starting the Corvallis Library, and donated hospital equipment, supported kindergarten, parks, and etc. In 1888 they fed 500 hungry Italian men working for the Corvallis and Eastern Railroad who had come to town seeking to be paid (6/2/1911). A portion of a poll tax which was a tax on every adult citizen was also allocated to the CFD (2/4/1903). Citizens, businesses (particularly insurance companies) also donated funds. When the city started paying an hourly rate for time spent fighting fires these funds appear to have been appropriated directly by the city council. Eventually, major equipment and buildings were funded by voter-approved bonds and salaries and supplies became part of the city budget.

### **The evolution of fire-fighting equipment.**

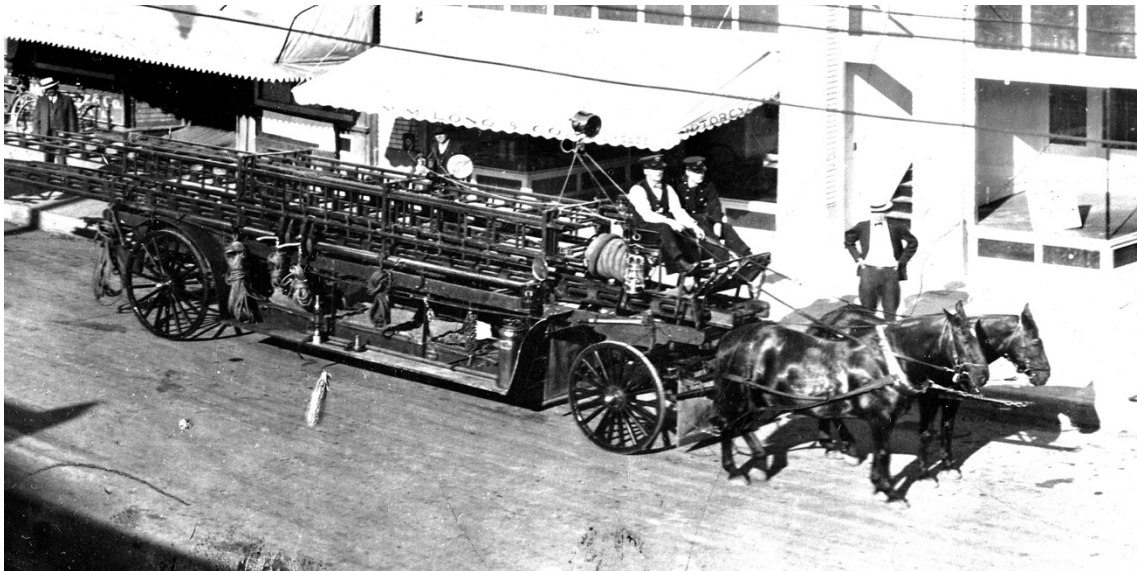
**Steam Engines and Chemical Engines.** Most of the early fire engines and hook and ladder vehicles were pulled by the firefighters. This worked well when the majority of the buildings were concentrated in a few blocks in the downtown area. But as the city grew, they were called to more distant areas. Many of the early vehicles could be converted to be horse drawn. The early fire engines were hand pumps operated by the firemen. Steam powered pumps were a major innovation with the vehicles often integrated into a steam system of the fire house so that the water in their boiler was always kept at a high temperature. However, although they required few men to man them, they were very heavy and were dependent on being pulled by teams of

at least three horses. Although there is a picture from about 1912 of a steam-type horse drawn pumper engine at the Corvallis fire station, I could only find one description of it. It was from a bystander who reported watching it headed towards a fire 'turning off Madison onto Ninth, smoke belching, lurching around the corner on two wheels ... the galloping horses turned off Ninth Street, then up Monroe...they must have turned too sharply...the engine hit the curbing, leaned sideways, and then tipped over with a crash'<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps it was irreparably damaged as I could find no other reports of it and it was not mentioned in a 1917 inventory of CFD equipment (1/19/1917). Also, I could find no evidence of the City Council appropriating funds to buy this machine. It may have been donated by a city that had motorized their equipment. If similar to other steamers, to be efficiently used, it would need to have been fired up at all times and with only about 24 fires /year (9/8/1911), its use many not have been very practical.

Another advance was the development of chemical fire engines. These consisted of a tank containing a solution of sodium bicarbonate. At the top of the tank was a glass container of sulfuric acid. The engine was activated when the acid container was broken mixing its contents with the bicarbonate solution which resulted in a chemical reaction releasing carbon dioxide and producing high pressure within the tank that was used to propel the solution. These came in all different sizes; some of a few gallons that could be carried by a fireman, to much larger containers that were conveyed on special wheeled vehicles or larger wagons. In 1905, the city had purchased a chemical engine but had no way to transport it. The fire chief, James K. Berry at that time (subsequently known as 'Jim the Fix'r – see Chapter 5) owned a bicycle repair shop and was a skilled mechanic. He designed a light cart to carry them; it was drawn by two men, one pushing from behind with a narrow wheel base so the 'cart can be scooted along on sidewalks' when streets are muddy (5/23/1905). A few months later he was lauded - a 'dwelling ...was saved only by the prompt use by Fire Chief Berry of the new fire-extinguisher, recently purchased by the department'. He continued as fire chief through 1906.

### **Horses, circa 1910 - 1918: Ned, King, Old Joe, and Dick.**

The CFD appears to have been slow to incorporate the use of horses to pull their machines. In 1891 and 1895, the City Council allowed the CFD to hire horses from a local dray company to haul apparatus to and from fires (5/1/1891, 3/14/1895). It is not clear how often these were used but there are examples of the City Council approving payments to drayage companies in 1912 for hauling fire apparatus and from the Sanborn maps it is evident that throughout the early years of its existence, there were stables either adjacent to or across the street from the CFD buildings. With the move to 356 Madison in 1892, there would have been room available within the building, but housing horses would have been a whole new level of complication in a multipurpose building, so some may have been kept nearby. It was apparently not until 1910 they were being used as the city council was debating changing from horses to gasoline powered fire equipment. In 1911 it was reported that the CFD horse handler, Alvin Matheney, was being paid \$60/mo (9/22/1911). By 1912 the CFD advertised for the purchase of a third horse (must be over 1600 lbs, rangy rather than bulky, not more than 6 years old, preferably black or iron gray) (11/29/1912). The 1912 Sanborn map of the City Hall/Fire Station states combination chemical/hose Wagon - 2 horses and in 1913 gratitude was apparently expressed to two horses, "Ned' and 'King' who were likely housed there (1/13/1913).



Corvallis Fire Department Horse Drawn Equipment at City Hall/Fire station, 356 Madison. Top: Chemical fire engine, 1915, Bottom, Ladder Truck 1914.

The use and maintenance of fire horses had a unique set of challenges. Firstly, they had to be highly trained, and matched in size to the weight of the equipment they pulled and to each other, and they had to be replaced every 4 to 10 years. Between fires they needed to be fed and cared for and once an alarm was sounded, the animals had to be hitched to the equipment. This led to the horses living near or at the fire station and the development of quick hitches to facilitate rapid harnessing. In one instance during a practice, it was reported that the CFD horses were hitched and out of the station within 33 sec of the alarm (9/22/1911). Then there was the matter of feeding them – hay – which was the subject of several rancorous city council meetings

in 1917. One facetious (?) headline in the GT was 'EARS BIT OFF, EYES DUG OUT, AT CITY COUNCIL' (8/23/1917). It was caused when city councilmen, Harper Mecklin and John F. Moore of the Fire and Water Committee along with the Fire Chief Graham, bought seven tons of hay for \$126 without the knowledge of J. M. Howard, the other member of the committee. Howard objected because any expenditures over \$100 had to be approved by the City Council.

Based on the photographs of the two CFD wagons in a 1914 parade, they would appear to require at least 5 horses to pull the two machines. Subsequently, several problems were recorded: In April, 1917, 'old Joe, the faithful horse' had a split hoof that put him indefinitely out to pasture until it healed (4/17/1917). Then later in the year, in racing to a fire up Monroe Avenue, the grade 'proved too much and the big horse 'Dick' dropped dead just past 23rd street - the building burned to the ground. The fire department boys were broken up over the loss of Dick for he was a fine animal and greatly beloved; he had been used on the street flusher and the ladder truck when needed. This leaves the department crippled worse than ever and makes it more and more apparent that motor equipment is essential' (6/14/1917). The brief video below explains the use of fire horses. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5GWgDOgfYQ>

**Motorized vehicles.** 1917 was a pivotal time for the CFD. In addition to the complications with the horses 'Old Joe' and 'Dick' outlined above, except for the horse caretaker and the part time chief, the department was staffed by volunteers. The US entered World War I on April 6, 1917 and by the end of the month it was reported that 30 of the most active members of the fire department had left for the war (4/27/1917). Then on May 18, 1917, the US Congress passed the Selective Service Act and over the next year almost all the remaining volunteers had been drafted and left (9/30/1918). Therefore, there was an increased urgency to modernize the department with motorized vehicles so it would not require so much man power. The citizens shared this concern as a \$10,000 bond issue for motorized fire equipment passed 1006 to 129 (6/26/1917) and shortly thereafter the city purchased two vehicles, a Garford hook and ladder truck and an American La France combination hose, pumper (1000 GPM), and chemical truck (12/29/1917). The latter vehicle was restored in 1975 by inmates at the Oregon Correctional Institution (3/28/1975) and is on display in the lobby of the CFD main station. The transition in technology also led to more professionalization of fire fighters because of the training required to man and maintain the new vehicles (1/7/1919). Apparently, at least one of these vehicles was still used in 1952 as it was suggested that it was time for it to be retired (2/23/1952).

### **A revolution - The proliferation of fire hydrants – the Rock Creek water system 1905**

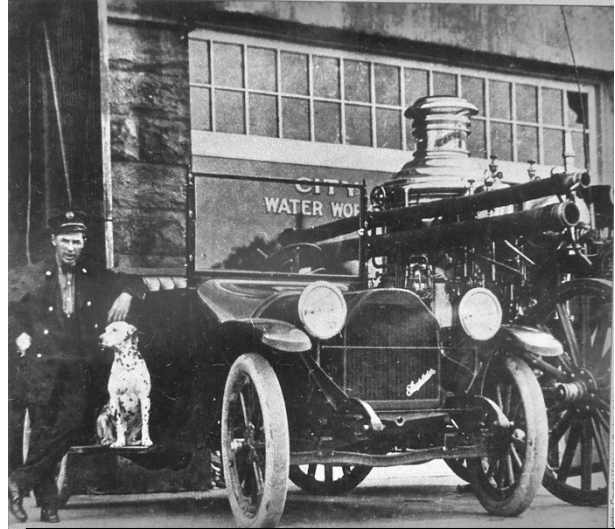
Initially, fire protection was dependent on cisterns to provide water. In 1874 there were three, all on 2<sup>nd</sup> St near the Jackson, Madison, and Adams intersections. These were initially filled using windmills to pump water from wells into the cisterns (8/14/1874). In 1875, it was reported that only one cistern held water during the dry season when water was most needed (5/21/1875). There were also problems with maintenance of the windmills (5/10/1876). In 1877 the W.M. Pitman Sash and Door factory installed a tank and pump at their factory that was used to fill the city's cisterns and provide water to other businesses (4/13/1877). This is shown as a 15,000-gallon tank at the foot of Madison on the 1884 and 1888 Sanborn maps. In addition, the 1888 Sanborn map shows a Corvallis Water Works 70-foot-tall tower with two adjacent water tanks holding 30,000 gallons each under construction at the NW corner of 1st and Adams (behind



Top: Ca, 1922. The first motorized Corvallis fire trucks, at City Hall/Fire Station, 356 Madison. Left to right: Garford Ladder truck No.1, American la France Hose and Chemical Wagon No. 1, and 1917 American La France Engine No. 1 (It still exists in the CFD lobby). Bottom: The Graham Fire Station (built, 1930; demolished, 1958) with a 1928 Ambulance. Photo ca, 1930. It was located on SW 4<sup>th</sup> behind the City Hall on Madison.



the current site of the Old World Center, 341 SW 2nd). After it was built, water was taken directly from the Willamette via two steam pumps and a windmill and piped without treatment to residences and several fire hydrants that had sufficient pressure to combat most fires<sup>4</sup>. In 1903 there were seven cisterns and according to a report 'those located on 4th, 5th and 7th Streets are very small and would be of little value in case of fire and all cisterns were fed by 3/4 " pipes. None have been used in years except one or two and they soon gave out'. In the same article it was reported that there were 7 fire hydrants and all were in good repair but one (7/15/1903). One of the most significant additions to the ability of the CFD to fight fires occurred in 1906 with the development of the Rock Creek water system that tapped a source 980 feet above Corvallis. It involved the construction of a predominantly wooden pipeline 16 miles long from the source to Corvallis and an additional 13 miles of water mains in town. This led to the removal of the water tower in 1908 (7/28/1908). The Rock Creek system increased the number of fire hydrants in the city from 9 to 45 and doubled the area of town that was covered (6/21/1905). By 1916, the number of hydrants had expanded to 125 (9/7/1916). This allowed for the two CFD substations to be constructed at 1450 Harrison and 9<sup>th</sup> and Washington (described above) because all that was required in terms of major equipment was a hose cart with hose and ladders that could be manually transported. With the advent of motorized vehicles, water from hydrants was sent through a pump in the truck and further pressurized before being sprayed on a fire. Before motorized vehicles, the CFD must have been mainly reliant on water from the hydrants and the use of a chemical engine for outlying areas lacking fire hydrants.



Fritz, the fire dog circa 1912. A steam pumper is shown at the right.

**Fritz the fire dog, a Hollywood star?**

Fritz was the CFD dog from about 1910 until he passed away in 1922 and was somewhat of a local celebrity, if not elsewhere. Chief Graham described the dog as 'smarter than any man in the department, including myself... He is a full-blooded Dalmatian coach dog...and does everything but talk. He climbs ladders, will go and bring ...pieces of clothing or equipment ...just as we name it, and it is his delight to put out burning matches or small blazes... Fritz goes with us to all the fires, ...' He was also known about town, especially at the butcher shop and was reported to 'go to a shop at the meal hour, nose his way in, have tossed to him a neatly tied bundle of weinerwursts or a soup-bone, [that] he never failed to catch... Then he [returned] to his eating place at the fire station, never opening the package until he got there. ...When the fire bell rang he was more excited than anybody in the city...' In 1919, he was sent to Hollywood to be in a film produced by Thomas H.



Ince for the National Fire Protection Bureau. The GT headline was 'CORVALLIS DOG TO APPEAR IN GREAT FILM' (8/21/1919). He was taken by Chief Dowell of the Portland Fire Department who was also to appear in the film. Chief Graham was invited to go but his pharmacist partner was out of town, so he could not spare the time (8/21/1919; 6/12/1922). Thomas Ince<sup>9</sup> (1880-1924) produced over 800 silent films and was known as the 'Father of the Western'. In 1924, he became mysteriously ill while on William Randolph Hearst's yacht and died. Although several of the Ince films have been preserved by the National Film Registry, the fire protection film was apparently not one of them.

**Summary and Acknowledgements.** This research started as a pandemic project when I decided to investigate the history of houses and people associated with them in our neighborhood south of Central Park. The Benton County Library provided a site license to the Corvallis Gazette Times archives that allowed me to investigate this history. One of the houses I investigated, 216 SW 8th, was originally owned by Harper Mecklin who was on the City Council Fire and Water committee around 1917 during the transition from horses to motorized vehicles. This led me to understand some of the problems with both the dependence on volunteer firemen and the use of horses for transporting fire vehicles. Subsequently, when reading about a major fire downtown in 1922, it was reported that Jim the Fixer's bicycle shop had been partially burned. On a brief investigation I found his real name, James K. Berry, and that he had been Fire Chief from about 1904 -1906. During that time, he designed a cart for transporting a chemical engine. In addition, he led a very complicated and turbulent life. This is described in Chapter 5. I then decided to use these two segments of CFD history and put them in the context of how the CFD started and its history up to the use of motorized vehicles through the administration of Chief Graham. George P. Wrenn, who was Corvallis Mayor during conflagration of 1869, was instrumental in starting the CFD. Subsequently he served as the first Fire Chief, and is the only CFD fireman to be killed in the line of duty. Because of his many contributions, in addition to his work with the CFD, I have summarized his work in a separately in Chapter 3. I would like to thank Mary Gallagher of the Benton County Historical Society for providing many of the photos, Mike Maldonado of the CFD for answering many of my questions about the department, and David Livingston for his comments and suggestions.

#### Sources

1. The specific dates refer to when the article referenced appeared in the Corvallis Gazette Times archives. The Corvallis Gazette Times originated in 1909 with the merger of two competing newspapers, the Corvallis Gazette (est. 1863) and the Corvallis Times (est. 1888).
2. David H. Fagan History of Benton County 1885  
<https://archive.org/details/HistoryOfBentonCountyOregon/mode/1up>
3. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: Daniel Alfred Sanborn was a surveyor and civil engineer who started producing fire insurance maps in 1866 initially in Tennessee for the Aetna Insurance Company. Eventually his company, the Sanborn Map Company, through

expansion and buyouts of competitors, produced maps of over 12,000 cities and towns in the U.S. In addition to mapping the buildings size, building materials, and location, they showed cisterns, fire hydrants, and fire stations. Sanborn fire maps of Corvallis were produced starting in 1884 and several updates were published through 1927. Most of these maps are currently available online through the Library of Congress. From these maps the growth of Corvallis and the types of structures in the town core are evident. By the first map in 1884 when the population was probably around 1300, there were about 200 buildings in the 15 blocks or the town core bordered by the river, 4<sup>th</sup> ST and Washington and Van Buren Avenues. They included commercial buildings, dwellings, and stables. Of those about 26 were constructed of brick or concrete blocks. Almost all these structures were heated with wood and light was often provided by a flame from a lantern or candle. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/sanborn-maps/?fa=location:oregon%7Clocation:corvallis>

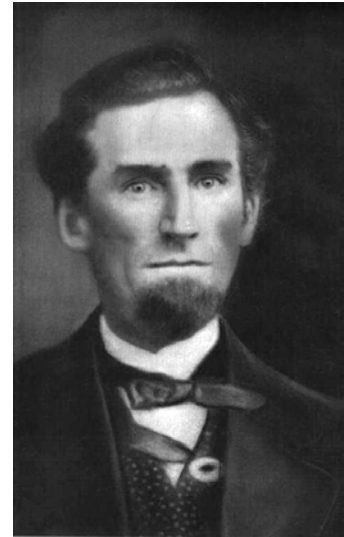
4. A history of Corvallis before 1900 by Minerva Kiger-Reynolds  
<https://cbcpubliclibrary.net/localhistory/Corvallis/Corvallis%20in%201900%20by%20Minerva%20Kiger-Reynolds.pdf>
5. History of Storey County, Nevada.  
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6. [1934 Maxson's Corvallis Directory, Volume 1](#)
7. Ancestry.com
8. Ray Bethers Remembers. Corvallis Magazine, Winter 1963.  
<https://cbcpubliclibrary.net/localhistory/Corvallis/Corvallis%20Magazine/Vol%202,%20No%201,%20Winter%201963.pdf>
9. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_H.\\_Ince](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_H._Ince)



**Chapter 3**  
**George P. Wrenn: Sheriff, Mayor, Justice of the Peace,**  
**and first Foreman/Chief of the Corvallis Fire Department**

**October 6, 2022**

Geo. P. Wrenn was the mayor of Corvallis when early in the morning of Wednesday July 21, 1869 a fire swept through the heart of the downtown and destroyed almost a city block between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and Madison and Monroe including at least 19 structures valued at \$40,000. As the newspaper reported ‘the best business portion of our beautiful city is laid in waste - and those handsome shade trees - which no hand of art can replace - are charred and blackened stems’. The next day Wrenn wrote a letter calling on his fellow citizens to organize a fire company and purchase a fire engine (7/24/1869)<sup>1,2</sup>. Three years passed after that fire before a fire company was organized on June 18, 1872 and named the Corvallis Engine Company No. 1. It had 26 members with Mr. Wrenn as Foreman.



George Peake Wrenn (1825-1882) was born in Washington, D. C. to Richard Wrenn and Martha Patsy Peake. According to the genealogy site, FamilySearch, his ancestors came from England in the mid 1600s and, 9 generations back an uncle was Christopher Wren Sr, the father of the famed architect and polymath Christopher Wren (1632 – 1723) who was responsible for the rebuilding of 52 churches after the great London fire of 1666 including St. Paul’s Cathedral that was completed in 1710. Shortly after his birth, Geo. P. Wrenn’s family moved to Columbus, Ohio and in 1847 he married Mary Evangelina Frances Cardwell (1826 – 1866) who was from Groton, NH. He apparently visited Portland by sea in 1848 and then returned to Ohio and in 1851 he brought his wife and two children along with his brother John overland to Oregon and settled in Marysville (Corvallis) where he worked as a blacksmith and manufactured plows<sup>4,5</sup>. Subsequently, he moved to a land claim west of Corvallis and in the 1860 census he was recorded as living in Kings Valley with his wife and four children and his occupation was listed as farmer and S.R. (stock raiser?). His wife passed away in 1866 and in 1867 he married Lucy Elizabeth ‘Lizzie’ Freel (1846-1883) in Philomath. They had 5 children.

In 1870 he moved to Corvallis and was listed in the census as working as a real estate agent and eventually also sold insurance, doors and windows, and was an auctioneer. According to the History of Benton County, he served one term, 1858-1859, as the Benton County Sheriff<sup>3</sup>. Subsequently, he was Corvallis mayor (1869-1870) being elected on the ‘People’s’ Ticket’ and defeating E. Holgate of the ‘City Ticket’. There were apparently no hard feelings as he partnered with Mr. Holgate in 1879 as the Wrenn and Holgate Real Estate Brokers and Auctioneers. He served as Foreman/Chief Engineer of the fire department from its inception in 1872 until 1876. He also served as a municipal court judge in 1870 (7/24/1937) and Justice of the Peace 1880-1882. It has been reported that he was a state senator in 1876/78 (6/12/2018), but he is not

listed in a summary of all the members of the legislature for that time period. However, in 1876 and 1878 he was elected Sergeant-at-Arms and door-keeper of the State Senate, respectively.

## CITY TICKET.

For Mayor,

E. Holgate,  
Recorder,

A. Cauthorn.  
Marshal,

M. H. Bell.  
Councilmen,

1st Ward.—CALVIN HANNAH,  
A PURDY.

2d Ward.—CHARLES GAYLORD,  
C. H. WALLACE.

3d Ward.—LEVI RUSSEL,  
A HOLDER.

## People's Ticket.

For Mayor,

Geo. P. Wrenn.  
Recorder,

W. J. Robertson.  
Marshal,

M. H. Bell.

Treasurer,

William Fliedner.

Councilmen,

1.—F. S. MATHEWS,  
PUN. AVERY,

2.—B. PILLEAN,  
A. R. McCONNELL,

3.—W. A. WELLS,  
AUG. KNIGHT.

Geo. P.  
Wrenn runs  
for mayor.  
6/12/1869

## To the Citizens of Corvallis.

CORVALLIS, July 22, 1869.

EDITOR GAZETTE: As we have just had in our city the most destructive fire which Corvallis has ever witnessed; in which our citizens have lost some \$40,000, and are still at a great loss for want of suitable places for business, and all, no doubt, the work of an incendiary, it is just and right that every citizen should use every means in their power to assist in ferreting out and bringing to justice the guilty let them be whom they may. I would call upon our citizens, as they value their lives and property, to go at work immediately and see that our city shall be better protected by the presence of a fire engine. A very small per cent. of the late loss would have bought a good fire engine. All of our citizens are aware that the City Council are limited in their means, so that they can do but little in that direction. Some of our prominent citizens called my attention to the necessity of a fire company. If our citizens would raise most of the cash, I would think it advisable for an appropriation. We have the tools for a hook and ladder company, but without a regular organized company they are of no use, as has been demonstrated in the two last fires we have had. It certainly is time our citizens should arouse themselves for the protection of their lives and property. Let us lose no time.

GEO. P. WRENN, Mayor.

### The death of Geo. P. Wrenn in a warehouse fire

There was a fire at 2 AM on a Saturday morning February 22, 1882 at the W. A. Wells grain warehouse near the Western Oregon Railroad depot that was located west of the corner of SW 6th and SW B St. The building contained elevators, scales and other machinery valued at \$11-12,000 and 15,000 bushels of wheat and other grain. The fire started in the upper story near the roof and had burned through the roof, but there was no fire in the lower part of the building when the firemen arrived. There was no water available to fight the fire. Wrenn was killed instantly by 'a part of the falling building when he and others were endeavoring to remove sacks and other material from the warehouse'. To this day, he is the only CFD member killed in the line of duty. The depot was located 40' from the burning building and was saved by the Hook and Ladder Co. which was able to drench it with water (3/3/1882).

GEORGE P. WRENN, Auctioneer. | E. HOLGATE, Att'y at Law

**Wrenn & Holgate,  
REAL ESTATE  
BROKERS,  
COLLECTION, LOAN, INSURANCE,  
GENERAL BUSINESS AGENTS, AND  
AUCTIONEERS.**

Office at present, back of ROSENTHAL'S Store,  
entrance on Madison street,  
**CORVALLIS, : : OREGON.**

Buying, Selling and Leasing Real Estate. Prompt  
attention given to  
**COLLECTIONS.**

Loans Negotiated, etc. Will keep Regular  
**Auction Sales Rooms**

And sell at AUCTION, anything desired, either at the  
Sales Rooms or elsewhere, in City or Country. Agents  
for good reliable INSURANCE COMPANIES.

We now have on hand for sale, both GRAIN and  
STOCK FARMS, and CITY PROPERTY, at fair prices, and  
easy terms.

WE CAN MAKE SALES IF ANYBODY CAN. We  
Please give us a call. **WRENN & HOLGATE,**  
Corvallis, April 17, 1879. 16-194.

6/27/1879

**SOAP CREEK TO THE FRONT.**—On last  
Friday morning one Wm. Post and M. J.  
Boatman, both residents of Soap Creek pre-  
cinct, had some misunderstanding about  
business matters in which angry words led  
to blows. Though nothing occurred to in-  
crease the love formerly existing between  
the parties, yet Post has increased respect  
for the physical ability of Boatman. Both  
are wise men, the former not so handsome  
as of yore, and the latter not so wealthy by  
twenty-five dollars. It was his Honor  
Judge Wrenn, of this city, who admonished  
them to "depart in peace."

8/6/1880

**GEO. P. WRENN,**  
Real Estate, Life and Insur-  
ance Agent.

Will attend to collecting of money on account or  
by notes. Prompt attention given to all business en-  
trusted to my care.

Doors, Windows, Blinds and Mouldings  
Kept constantly on hand.

Office opposite King's Stables. 22

2/17/1882

A young boy of sixteen or seventeen years  
old was arrested and brought before  
Justice Wrenn, last Wednesday, for at-  
tempting to invade the virtue of a young  
seventeen year old girl. Both of this place.  
If the charge is proven against him the re-  
sult will no doubt be an entertainment for  
him for a term down about Salem.

2/3/1882

## References

1. All dates in brackets refer to a Corvallis Gazette Times article or one of its predecessors.
2. Corvallis in 1900 by Minerva Kiger-Reynolds  
<https://cbcpubliclibrary.net/localhistory/Corvallis/Corvallis%20in%201900%20by%20Minerva%20Kiger-Reynolds.pdf>
3. List of Benton Co. Sheriffs 1848 - 2013  
[https://www.co.benton.or.us/sites/default/files/fileattachments/sheriff039s\\_office/page/2288/history\\_sheriff\\_list-12\\_24\\_15.pdf](https://www.co.benton.or.us/sites/default/files/fileattachments/sheriff039s_office/page/2288/history_sheriff_list-12_24_15.pdf)
4. Geo P. Wrenn Biographies. Genealogy Trails History Group. Benton County Oregon.  
<http://www.genealogytrails.com/ore/benton/bio1.html>
5. David H. Fagan History of Benton County 1885  
<https://archive.org/details/HistoryOfBentonCountyOregon/mode/1up>



# Chapter 4 A History of Central Park, Corvallis:

## From Central School to Central Park

August 3, 2021

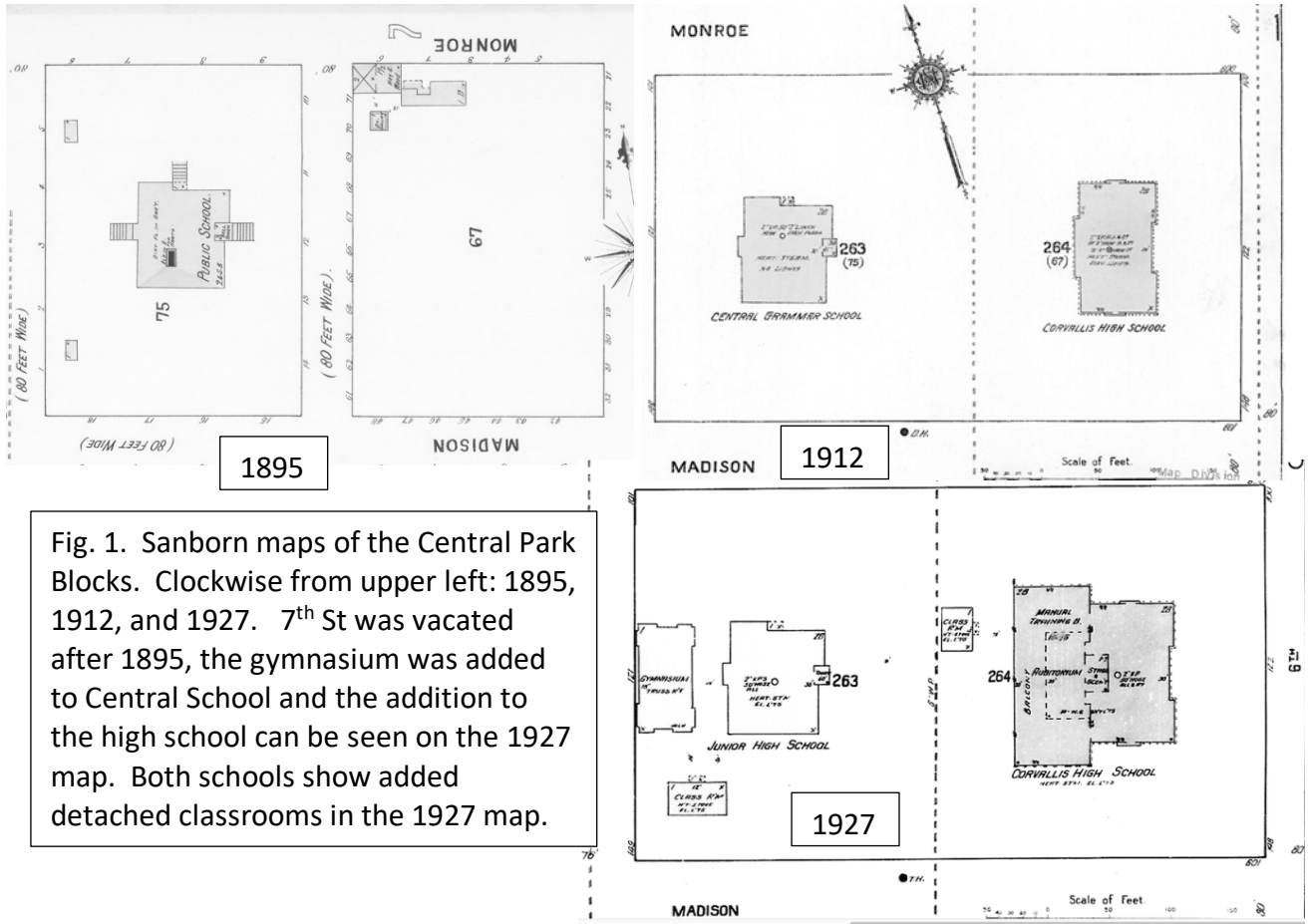


Fig. 1. Sanborn maps of the Central Park Blocks. Clockwise from upper left: 1895, 1912, and 1927. 7<sup>th</sup> St was vacated after 1895, the gymnasium was added to Central School and the addition to the high school can be seen on the 1927 map. Both schools show added detached classrooms in the 1927 map.

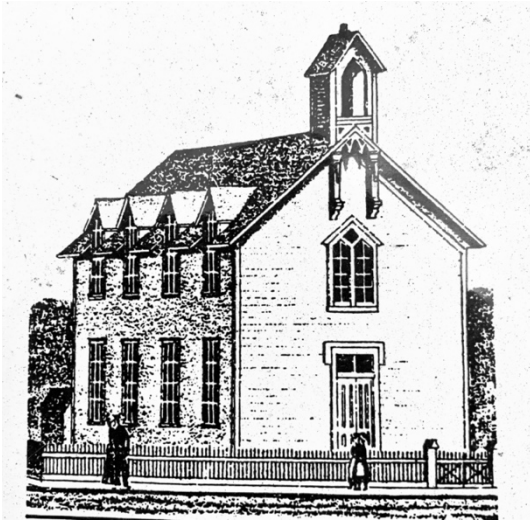


Fig. 2. The Chapel School (1871 – 1873 and an ad from 1872 for the school from the GT showing tuition charges (1/27/1872)

**THE CHAPEL SCHOOL.**

---

**CORVALLIS, - - OREGON.**

---

**REV. J. H. BABCOCK, M. A.,**  
**RECTOR;**

**GEO. W. BOYD,**  
**ASSISTANT.**

---

**CHARGES:**

Primary Department, . . . . .	\$6 00
Middle           "           . . . . .	8 00
Higher           "           . . . . .	12 00
Languages, Each, Extra, . . . . .	5 00

Pupils received at any time. Bill for Tuition Payable on the First Day of the Term. For Admission, or Information, apply to the Rector.

Corvallis, Jan. 20, 1872.           f9:8tf.

Please note: all date citations refer to the newspaper date in the Corvallis Gazette Times archives.

**The Chapel School.** Although public schools dominated the Central Park Blocks from about 1889 – 1947, initially for a few years (1871 - 1873), there was an Episcopal school (The Chapel School) for girls located on 4 lots on the west block. It consisted of classrooms and a chapel on the 1st floor and a dormitory on the 2nd floor. After the school closed, the chapel was used for church services but it was dismantled in about 1879 and some of the material used for constructing the Episcopal Church at 7th and Jefferson, that eventually was moved to become the Arts Center at 7th and Madison.

**The first public school (Central School) (1889-1936).** The first public school was built in 1889 and was a two-story wood frame structure built in the Italianate style; its most noticeable feature was a square bell tower that rose an additional story above the main roof level (Fig. 1, 3). Between 1895 and 1912, a gymnasium was added to the west side of the building. In 1936, the school was demolished. It was reported that *'the old play shed to the west is to be left and used by the junior high school'* (2/27/1936). This likely referred to the gymnasium shown in Fig. 3 as it was present in an aerial photograph taken in 1939.

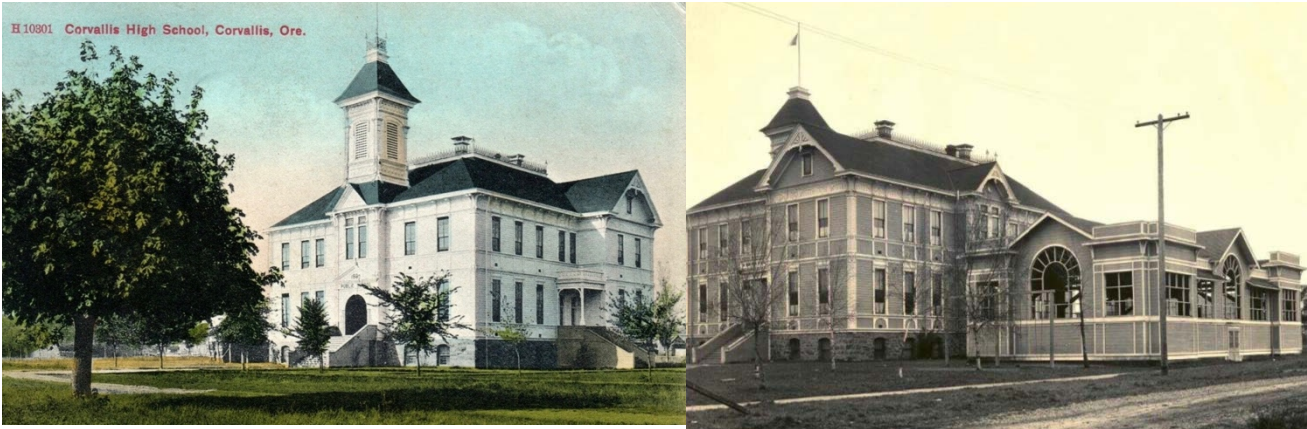


Fig. 3. The first public school (1889). Left, ca 1907; right, ca 1915 shows the gymnasium that was added on the west side after 1912.

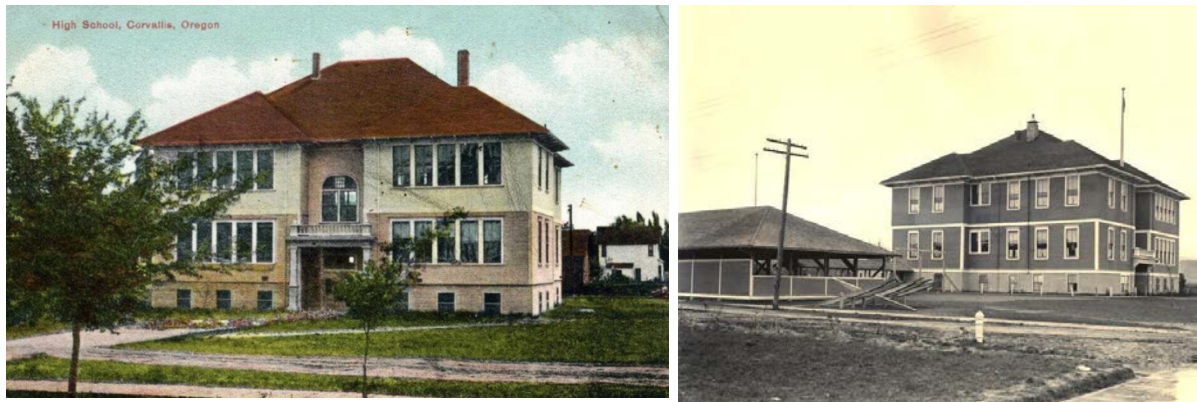


Fig. 4. The second public school built on the Central Park Blocks. From top clockwise: In about 1903 facing 6<sup>th</sup> ST; after move to NW area in 1909, and demolition in 1963 (from GT, 6/12/1963) .



**School #2 (1903-1963) (From new School, to High School, to North School, to Franklin School) (Fig. 4).**

By 1900, as the Corvallis population grew, the original school was plagued with overcrowding. Therefore, the school administrators decided to construct a new building. The architect was Charles Ewart who also designed the first school. The new school was a square building with four class rooms 27' x 33' on each of 2 floors. Initially, the exterior of the building and two first floor rooms were to be completed (8/1/1903) and the rest apparently finished later. It was constructed on the east block facing 6<sup>th</sup> street and contributed a total of 8 additional classrooms. From accepting the initial

plans to completing construction took 60 days and initially provided 2 classrooms on the ground floor (9/2/1903). (Corvallis Development Services must have been very efficient back then). It was reported that *'In Miss Kerns room there are 68 little chaps and to take care of them properly is beyond the power of any teacher. A similar congestion prevails in other rooms'* (11/7/1903). Then after the building was partially completed, *'Miss Maud Kerns will occupy the southwest room on the 1st floor and will take about 45 scholars out of the 68 she has been teaching'* (11/10/1903). However, any relief these new classrooms provided was short-lived. By 1909, the classrooms were so crowded that teaching had to be done in double shifts. Therefore, the construction of a new high school was proposed. But where to build it? They decided to move the newly built 8-classroom building and use it for an elementary school elsewhere. An election was held to decide on whether the citizens would support a bond of \$30,000 and it passed! Also, under consideration was whether to move the current building to a north or south location as an elementary school. *'There were 90 votes cast in favor of the north side site for the location of the school house to be removed, to 14 against, while 86 voted for the south side and 12 opposed it'* (5/24/1909). Somehow that led to the move to what was then the NW frontier of Corvallis, 18<sup>th</sup> and Taylor. Consequently, in 1909 before the new high school could be built, they began moving the new (old) school out of the way. How do you move a 54' x 66' two story school building taking into consideration the width of streets and other obstacles? In this case they cut it in half and moved the two pieces separately. It was a good thing there were a lot of loggers around experienced with large saws. The GT took a dim view of the initial progress of the first half - they granted that there was a justified delay in getting timbers large enough to support the building, but stated *'It took more than a week to get half the building two blocks and from Thursday until Monday that half blocked Monroe at ninth, and no attempt was made to move it further'* (8/3/1909). A few days later they were more optimistic announcing that the half-building was finally moved off Monroe and *'is being taken down through the orchard a half block west of the German Lutheran Church'* (8/11/1909). And then later in the month, *'The first half of the primary school building is now at its ...final location'* (8/27/1909). The move of the second half of the building must have been uneventful, because the GT did not report on it. At its new location it was renamed 'North School' and then in 1924 it was renamed Franklin school. It was inactivated in 1949 as an elementary school when the new Franklin School was completed and it was decided that it would be demolished. However, it lingered on for many years and was used for storage, a maintenance shop, adult education and other classes. Eventually it was sold to developers for the construction of apartments and was demolished in 1963 (6/12/1963) (Fig. 4).



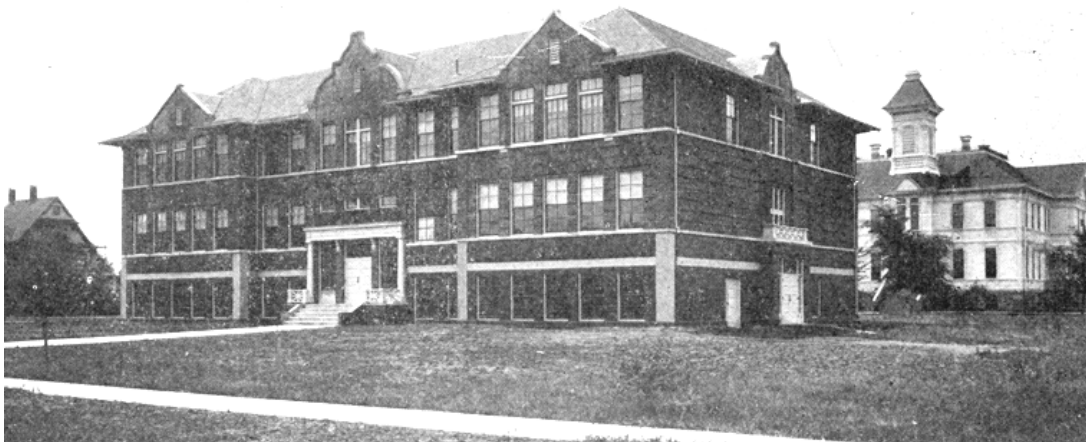


Fig. 5. Corvallis High School. Top, shortly after completion in about 1912, Central school can be seen on the right; it continued as a grade school; bottom, after remodel in 1917.

**The original Corvallis High School (1910-1946).** As described above, by 1909, the two school buildings were inadequate to accommodate the student population. The GT reported that *'each year shows so large a gain in new pupils that something should be done at once...As matters now stand it is ...necessary to excuse many of the classes for one-half of each day in order that the large number of scholars can be given equal instruction'*(1/22/1909). There was an election to consider supporting a \$30,000 bond and the vote was 104 in favor to 6 against. It was later *'learned that two of these negative votes were cast by mistake, the parties having intended to cast an affirmative ballot'* (5/24/1909). (It doesn't seem like a lot of votes, but that was back in the days before women could vote!). Plans were submitted for the new High School by the architect E. E. McClaran of Portland (5/27/1909), construction was started, and students began moving in to the new school in February of 1910 (2/7/1910). It was a 2-story rectangular structure with a full daylight basement and with Arts and Crafts details. A senior class of 15 students graduated in 1911. This was in contrast to the 46 students who had started the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Less than half returned for their sophomore year suggesting that many may have left to work. By 1911 there were 213 students and 8

faculty. Also, by 1911, the school was found to be inadequate. It lacked a gymnasium, auditorium, music rooms, and etc. Plus, the number of students continued to increase. Therefore, almost immediately after it was built, plans were made for its expansion. By 1917, two bond issues for a total of \$45,000 were approved and Charles H. Burggraf, of Albany, was hired to design the remodel with A. Lombard of Eugene receiving the contract for construction. Burggraf designed many public buildings including schools, court houses, libraries, and hotels in Oregon and Washington. The completed school was over double in size from the original and had 22 classrooms and a combination gymnasium-auditorium, the exterior was modified by the use of shallow pediments in the front of the building and covered with cream-colored brick. Soon, however, even this new building was too small and by 1920, a two-room portable classroom was added (Fig. 1). By the 1930s the school housed 650 students in a building designed for 400. The location in downtown Corvallis posed a number of issues including a lack of space for athletic facilities, parking, and an expanded school. Therefore, a new CHS was constructed on 25 acres off NW 11<sup>th</sup> ST. It opened in 1935 and the old CHS downtown was converted to a junior high school.



Fig. 6. Headlines from GT 9/16/1946.

At 3:10 AM on September 15, 1946, a taxi driver, Neil Miester, traveling east on Monroe found the street covered in smoke from a fire at the junior high school. The fire department was alerted and shortly after their arrival flames had broken through the roof; the balcony crashed to the floor followed shortly by the roof. It took 3 hours to control the fire. Subsequent heavy rains added to the damage (9/16/1946). It was thought that the fire started on the stage of the auditorium. The building was 50% destroyed – it was the worst fire in Corvallis in 20 years. The ruined building lingered in its damaged state as the school district contemplated how to proceed. It was a challenging time because there were material and labor shortages and in addition to the damage, the building was determined to be obsolete and in a poor location. Therefore, the board decided to add 6 rooms to the high school and start a grades 1-7 elementary school and years 8 -12 high school program in the fall of 1947. Until then the senior high school would run on a double shift system to accommodate the students from the burned school (11/15/1946). This sealed the fate of the damaged school and it was eventually torn down – however, not before the west wall of the ruined building collapsed in March of the next year (3/7/1947).

With the removal of the schools from the two blocks, there was interest in continuing public use of the land. Various buildings were proposed including replacing the court house (even then it was thought to be outdated), a replacement for city hall, and an armory that could also be used for a civic center. One proposal was to construct a new court house, city hall and other city buildings facing the park area and then extend it up to OSU's entry area to the west removing all the intervening buildings in the process and creating a grand mall fused with the OSU. It is not clear what the Presbyterians thought of this idea. The school board initially offered to sell the 2 blocks to the city for \$125,000 which was considered too high (2/13/1947). Eventually, \$87,500

was agreed on, there was an election to considering selling bonds, and the vote was 1580 to 410 to purchase the two-block area for a proposed civic center (10/8/1947).

Although the purchase by the city was for a civic

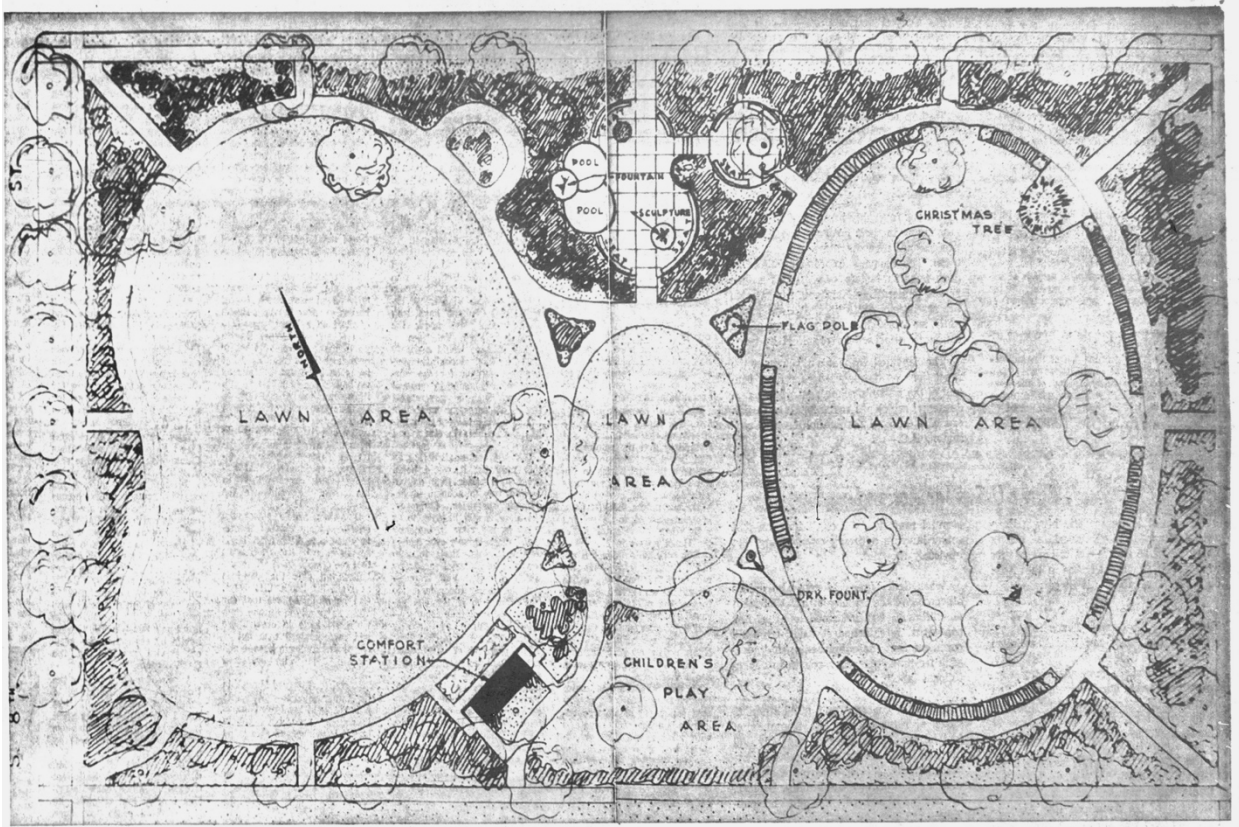
## **Planners Argue Over Allowing Central Park Use For Car Lot; Final Decision Awaits Full Plans**

2/20/1957

center, the area apparently became a de facto park, possibly because the west block had been used as a recreational field by the now-demolished junior high school. In a 1953 aerial photo, each block was an open field surrounded by trees (Fig. 7). The blocks were originally called Civic Center Site. However, the name was changed in 1954 by the city council to Central Park, but in 1957 it was changed back to Civic Center Site reflecting a controversy over the future of the blocks and the original intent of the voters (11/8/1960). There was also a major faction including the mayor who wanted to convert the part of east block into a parking lot. *'Two factions-those for making part of the park into a parking lot and those for waiting until a program for development of the area can be worked out - were split in the [Planning] Commission....Mayor Carl Williams led the attack for making the east half of the east block ...into a parking lot. He said he was sure the ...community would favor the plan by at least two to one. ...Mayor Williams pointed out that the park area... had been purchased ...through a bond issue ...that specified it was to be a civic center'* (2/20/1957). In addition, at one point the area was considered for an indoor-outdoor swimming pool (7/21/1960). In 1960, it was then reported *'Of growing concern [is the] failure of the council to give official recognition to Central Park. The city-owned area remains undesignated as to purpose. Improvement and upkeep along lines of master-planning for its development cannot be ...fostered until the council sees fit to dedicate the area to park use'* (9/13/1960). Later that year, the park board requested that the name be changed back to Central Park (11/8/1960). (It should be noted that Mayor Williams, the parking lot proponent, did not seek re-election in 1958 and was replaced by Gordon Harris (11/5/1958) who served though 1962 when he retired and was replaced by Kenneth McGregor(12/18/1962)). Then in 1961 it was reported *'A policy calling for the improvement of the two-block Central Park area as a park was adopted by the Corvallis city council...'* (6/20/1961). Subsequently, a Central Park development plan was approved (9/12/1961) that included plans of facilities and plantings (Fig. 7) by landscape architect Ben Solberg. The Director of Corvallis Parks and Recreation, Bob Robertson, had maps prepared of the area, detailing planting beds, shrubs and tree placements, benches, and etc. It was reported in 1965 that *'Drainage, irrigation, and walkways have been installed. The Oregon Turf and Chemical Co. is in the process of reseeding the lawn areas and preparing the planting beds. They have removed the remains of the old junior high school foundation and replaced soil where necessary'*(8/28/1965). Many local groups selected specific areas or items that they would sponsor; e.g. the United Church Women provided park benches, Troop 3 of Boy Scouts donated funds for shrubs in Bed No. 6, and Camp Fire girls raised \$100 for purchase of trees (2/24/1966). The led to the construction of the park as we know it today, more or less (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Top. Central Park, 1953. Bottom, the original plans for Central Park in Corvallis. From the GT, 2/24/1966.



In addition to the references to articles in the GT noted in the text, the following resources were also used:

**A History of Corvallis High School**

<http://www.hp-nw.com/images/CHS%20book.pdf>

Charles H. Burggraf, Architect

<https://www.livingplaces.com/people/charles-h-burggraf.html>



## Chapter 5

### Who was Jim the Fix'r?

June 22, 2022

The sign above his shop is celebrated in Corvallis because it was the inspiration for the title of a future award-winning novel\* by a young Oregon State College English instructor, Bernard Malamud. But who was Jim the Fix'r? If one scours the archives of the local paper, the Corvallis Gazette Times (GT), he first appears with an ad in 1921 announcing that 'JIM the FIX'R has opened a Bicycle Store and Repair Shop' in downtown Corvallis with a list of the items that he would repair. It also provides his name, J. K. Berry. Born in Minnesota in 1878, James Kemmer Berry (1878-1943) moved to Philomath, OR in 1884 with his family. His father, Jacob L. Berry (1838-1885), a Civil War veteran (12/28/1900), was a minister who died of typhoid shortly after their arrival. James Berry was recorded in 1895, age 17, working at a sawmill (11/16/1895) and in the 1900 census, age 21, he was living with his mother and siblings in Corvallis. That same year it was reported that 'James K. Berry who has been with Dilly "the Fixer" of Corvallis, for three years, has purchased a half interest in the Merrill Bros. shop' (10/27/1900). A newspaper ad for Thomas Wilson Dilly's shop stated 'Mending and Fixing!...Machines, umbrellas, clocks, door knobs, locks - anything of the sort can be fixed by Dilly, the fixer' (12/10/1897). Berry's initial focus was apparently selling fish because part of the Merrill Bros. shop purchase included '...A clean up-to-date fish market ... adjoining their shop where fish of all kinds fresh from the coast daily, may be had' (10/27/1900). The same year he advertised 'J. K. Berry sells salmon at 7 cts delivered' (9/25/1900). However, Berry used the skills he learned from 'Dilly the fixer' and within a year it was reported that 'A new bicycle repair shop is to be opened in town with James Berry' as the proprietor (5/15/1901). 'This

**JIM the FIX'R**

Has opened up a Bicycle Store and Repair Shop  
one door south of Kline's Store.

Carries a complete line of Bicycles and Supplies.  
Does all kinds of Repair Work including Bicycles,  
Guns, Sewing Machines, Graphaphones,  
Typewriters, Tennis Racquets, Golf Clubs, in  
fact, most anything that is fixable.

GOOD WORK AT A REASONABLE PRICE

Give Us a Trial.

**J. K. BERRY**

9/27/21



Evening Telegram  
**James K. Berry** 1904

\* *The Fixer*. Bernard Malamud. 1966. Farrer, Straus & Giroux. National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize (both for fiction, 1967).

was followed by frequent ads for his 'Bicycle Hospital' and also umbrella sales and repair; 'GET YOUR RIBS FIXED'. By 1902 he appeared to have a full-fledged sporting goods store and it was reported that 'At James Berry's Bicycle Hospital ...A machine for loading shells has been purchased, and guns galore have been added...for sale.' Also, it was noted that he rented out guns (11/22/1902). Although he specialized in bicycles, he was clearly interested in more advanced forms of



*Alsi Historical & Genealogical Society*

James K. Berry with early seaplane forced down near Waldport. 1910

**GET YOUR RIBS FIXED.**  
**J. K. BERRY**  
 Has just received  
**A Fine Line of Umbrella Fixtures**  
 Such as Covers, Handies, Ribs, Etc.  
 Bring in your old umbrella and get it fixed as good as new at a small cost.  
 Umbrellas recovered, repaired and made to order. Extra fine covers to order.

Ads from 1901

transportation. In 1903, he handled the 'California motorcycle and the Fairbanks-Morse gasoline engine' (6/27/1903). After he crashed a motor bike south of town, it was noted that 'He was brought to his home at Victor Hurt's, where a good night's sleep restored him...' (6/20/1903). Then a few weeks after an ad appeared in the newspaper seeking agents for several types of cars, he had his own Oldsmobile. It was described as exhibiting 'no ungainly housing. All machinery is encased in what might be an ordinary jump seat buggy box arranged for two persons. Its speed capacity is 30 miles per hour' The price of the machine in Corvallis was \$690 (8/5/1903). It was placed on exhibit at his shop (7/31/1903) and he took a reporter for a ride - 'the exhilaration; pulse-quickening, strange sensation of even a short excursion ...see how easy it is

**IF YOUR BICYCLE NEED DOCTORING**

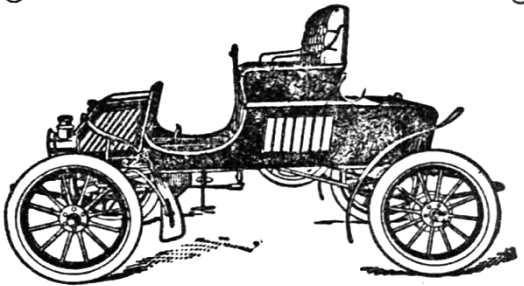
Take it to the  
**BICYCLE HOSPITAL**  
**J. K. BERRY, Proprietor.**



to lapse into poetry when there's inspiration.' (8/7/1903). In 1904, he was in charge of one of four divisions (modern transportation?) of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade and 'furnished a good display ... of automobiles, motors and bicycles'. The parade was led by 'The goddess of liberty, represent by Miss Grace Huff, [who]rode in a white chariot drawn by a span of milk white horses.' another division included 'The Modern Woodmen float representing real Indian women armed with tomahawks', ...and 'The Lions, on a beautiful float with a real live ... lion in a cage' (7/8/1904). The parade over a half a mile long and was attended by upwards of 4000 people (7/8/1904).

A year earlier it was reported that Berry had driven an automobile, the first in Corvallis, called a 'Rambler' from Portland with a running time of 'something over eight hours', and that he sold it to August Fischer whose family owned a local flour mill for \$800 (7/4/1903). However, in 1905 there were legal proceedings by Mr. Fischer against Mr. Berry. They had apparently 'together purchased an automobile as an investment to be sold at a profit, each having a half interest' with Mr. Fischer having fronted Berry's half of the price with promissory notes to be paid by Mr. Berry. Mr. Fischer then sold his half interest to Berry for another note. The first note came due and was paid by a renewal (4/7/1905). However, something happened and a suit was brought by Fischer against Berry and, the sheriff confiscated all of Berry's sporting goods stock. The newspaper was sympathetic towards Mr. Berry and reported that he had reopened his repair business because 'The law cannot take his tools away from a workman. They are his means of livelihood, and have been wisely placed beyond the reach of sheriffs, writs and debts'

**AGENTS WANTED**  
Everywhere. Write now.



● RAMBLER, OLDSMOBILE, WAVERLY & TOLEDO  
Automobiles, \$500 up.  
● RAMBLER, IMPERIAL, MONARCH, CRESCENT  
& BARNES Bicycles, \$20 and upwards.  
● MOTORCYCLES.  
Send for catalogues.  
**FRED T. MERRILL CYCLE CO.**  
Portland, Oregon.  
Spokane 6/18/1903 Seattle



Harold Woodcock and Eunice S. Taylor with 1903 Rambler that was likely the first car in Corvallis and involved in the Fischer-Berry lawsuit. Woodcock purchased it from August Fischer. Woodcock served two terms as Corvallis mavor. 1923-1925 and 1943-1947. Photo ca. 1904.

(4/8/1905). A few months later, Long's Bicycle Store announced in an ad that it had 'bought the J.K. Berry bicycle Store and repair shop (9/16/1905).' It was then reported that Fisher vs. J. K. Berry was settled (12/5/1905). Subsequently, Long advertised 'Having secured the services of J. K. Berry, who has eight years' experience in bicycle and general repair work, I am now prepared to all kinds of repair work on short notice' (3/20/1906). What might be interpreted from this is that Mr. Berry extricated himself from his indebtedness to Mr. Fischer by selling his inventory to M. M. Long, closing his shop, and working for Mr. Long. However, this saga is confusing because it was reported in 1904 that 'August Fisher's automobile was sold to Harold Woodcock (8/17/1904). Therefore, Berry may have had other debts, or he may have been too occupied to keep his shop running what with being Corvallis Fire Chief and contending with a disintegrating marriage and infant child (see below). Furthermore, about this time, Fischer apparently sued his mother possibly over his father's estate suggesting that he might have been a litigious type person (4/1/1904).

While all this was going on Berry was serving as the Corvallis Fire Chief, elected in late 1904. He attended a meeting of Pacific Coast fire chiefs at Vancouver, B.C. (10/19/1904). Before 1903, firemen were purely volunteers and were not paid. The city council then voted to pay the fire chief \$1 and the firemen 50 cents/hr when they were fighting a fire (9/16/1903). Subsequently for a fire at a sawmill, the bill came to \$45.35 with Berry as fire chief receiving \$9.50 and the balance paid to 7 firemen who worked 9 to 10 hrs each as the 'fire was in lumber piles where the flames smoldered for many hours' (3/15/1905). This was before fire hydrants were located throughout the city so several fire extinguishers known as chemical engines had been purchased but there was no way to transport them to a fire. In 1905 Berry designed a light cart to carry them; it was drawn by two men, one pushing from behind with a narrow wheel base so the 'cart can be scooted along on sidewalks' when streets are muddy and the work building them by the Horning Bros. was being completed (5/23/1905). A few months later he was lauded; a 'dwelling ...was saved only by the prompt use by Fire Chief Berry of the new fire-extinguisher, recently purchased by the department'. He continued as fire chief through 1906.

In addition to all that, he was working with motor boats; 'The new gasoline launch built and owned by Jim Berry, the bicycle man, was launched yesterday ...and moved off gracefully...probably the fastest gasoline launch on the upper river...(12/13/1904). Then in 1906 he was using a 'sawmill launch' to tow a raft of logs up the Willamette when the propeller broke and he lost control of the raft and it was lost down the river (1/23/1906).

After 1906, reports in the local newspapers of James K. Berry cease. The 1910 census indicates that Mr. Berry was living in Newport and working as a machinist with his own shop. Over a decade later in 1920 Berry resurfaced in Corvallis again with M.M. Long Sporting Goods announcing in an ad that 'James K. Berry and Fred Arrants have charge of our repair shop. They will fix your Sewing Machines, Lawn Mowers', etc. (6/10/1920).

### **The 'birth' of Jim the Fix'r**

'Tilly the fixer', Berry's ex employer, sold his shop in 1906 (6/1/1906) and in September of 1921 Berry announced the opening of his new bicycle and repair shop with the ad shown at the beginning of this chapter adopting a variant of Tilly's nick name, and 'Jim the Fix'r' was born. He 'Does all kinds of Repair Work including Bicycles, Guns, Sewing Machines, Graphophones,

Typewriters, Tennis Racquets, Golf Clubs, in, fact, most anything that is fixable' (9/27/21). Shortly thereafter, he rented the Blackledge Furniture space at 330 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> and by March of 1922 his shop was at that location.

To increase his clientele, he composed doggerel proclaiming his skills in a GT ad (10/12/1921).

Jim The Fix'r is a handy man.

He will fix your Shotgun or solder your Can,

He will fix your Bike so you won't have to hike,

Or mend your Tennis racquet so you can strike.

He will fix your Sewing Machine so it wont miss a stich

Or your golf Club so you can putt them from the ditch.

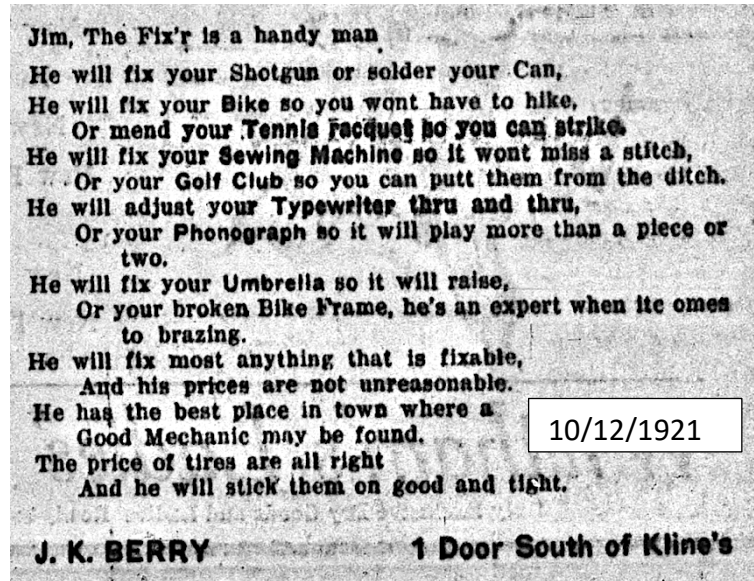
He will adjust your Typewriter thru and thru,

Or your Phonograph so it will play more than a piece or two.

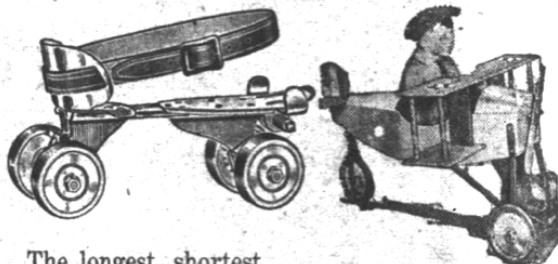
He probably should have stopped there, but he kept going... see below - read it for yourself!

The poetry must have worked as Mr. Barry was successful enough to purchase a new Chevrolet for \$625 in 1924 (3/26/1924) (His Oakland car had been lost in a fire in 1922 when the roof caved in on it (6/12/1922). During the 1920s his ads for lawn mower sharpening and repair, keys for any model car, typewriter repair, and soldering of aluminum ware, were common in the GT. In 1924 he advertised 'Lawn mowers sharpened ... by latest electric method. quick service' (5/8/1924). A Christmas ad in 1925 featured children's vehicles (e.g. the Spark Plug 'Just like a real auto to the little chap') and in 1929, his participation in Corvallis civic life was evident when Jim the Fix'r was listed as one of the sponsors of the Corvallis Rod and Gun club 'Boy's Varmint Hunt'. 'Heds of birds and tails of animals must be brought in to be counted to determine who won the prizes (7/20/1929). One of his last ads was in 1930 announcing that he was a distributor for Eureka vacuum cleaners.

In 1931, Jim the Fix'r retired and sold his shop to Lawrence E. 'Jim' Howard.



# Christmas Presents Practical



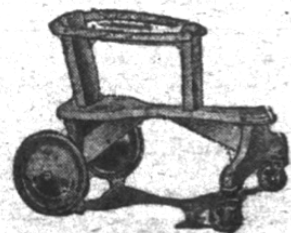
The longest, shortest and strongest skates made—\$1.85 to \$3.75.

**Aero Plane** ..... \$12.00  
A unique and practical novelty; made in Oregon

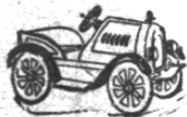


**Wagons** \$3.45 to \$10.00  
Balloon tires, strong and well built; made in Oregon.

**Scoters**  
All sizes \$3.50 to \$5.50  
Made in Oregon



**Baby Car**  
Teach the baby to walk; made in Oregon.



**Spark Plug**  
Just like a real auto to the little chap; made in Oregon.

These goods are all guaranteed and are manufactured by a good reliable firm and extra parts easily obtained.

Velocipedes and Bicycles  
General Repair Work  
Keys made.

12/19/25

## JIM the Fixer

If you have anything that needs fixing—bring it in

# FREE for Limited Time

Hair-Dryer, Sanitor and Sanitizing Compound with Eureka Standard and Junior (in Combination)

**EUREKA**  
VACUUM CLEANER

All for \$5.00 down.  
Balance easy Monthly payments

Here is an offer that makes even more attractive this unmatched cleaning combination—the famous Eureka Standard for floor coverings, with the powerful, light (4¼ lbs.) Eureka Junior for cleaning autos, stairs, upholstery, everything “above the floor.”

We will give—with every Eureka Standard and Junior purchased in combination—the wonderful electric (heater) hair-dryer attachment ordinarily retailing for \$3.00; also a Sanitor with Sanitizing Compound which you will find convenient and useful for deodorizing, freshening up clothes closets, etc.

**Small Down Payment—Easy Terms**  
With Small Carrying Charge

But remember, this offer is for a limited time only. Phone your order or request free demonstration NOW.

J. K. BERRY

## Jim the Fix'r

330 S. 2nd — Corvallis

5/20/1930



## Who really was 'Jim the Fix'r'?

OK, so he could fix things, but who really was 'Jim the Fixer/Fix'r'? Well, he had six wives. He was involved with members of a notorious Corvallis religious cult called the "Holy Rollers" that resulted in murders, suicides and trials that were repeatedly featured in sensational front-page headlines in papers from Corvallis, Portland, Seattle and around the world and has been the subject of several books and a film, consequently, I will not go into them in detail.

The "Holy Rollers" were comprised of about 20 individuals (16 women) started in Corvallis in 1903 by a German immigrant, Franz Edmund Creffield (1870-1906). During church services the congregants rolled for hours on the floor while howling and screaming for God's forgiveness, hence their name. Because of the noise of the services that extended late into the night, they were eventually banned from holding them within the Corvallis city limits. Berry became engaged to Maud Hurt, who was a fervent follower of Creffield. However, possibly under Creffield's urging she changed her mind and married him instead. As described above, when Jim crashed his motor bike in 1903, he was taken to his 'home at Victor Hurt's'. Maud was one of Victor's daughters.

In January 1904, Jim married Clara Mae King and one child, Kenneth, was born in 1905. About a year later in September of 1906, he published a series of notices in the paper that he would 'not be responsible for any debts contracted by my wife or any one, other than myself' (9/4/1906) suggesting that all might not be well with the marriage. He wife subsequently attempted to kill herself and he divorced her and the newspaper reported 'Her rash act was due to melancholy resulting from domestic troubles' (9/25/1906). By the 1910 census, Mr. Berry's wife is listed as Hortense (Tensie) S. Johnson Berry (1887-1979). They had a child in 1911, Nema Louise Berry (1911 - 1973), but in the 1920 census, Tensie was married to Chester Ryan and living in Beaver Creek along with her daughter Nema Berry.

Back to the holy rollers... At one point in early 1904, a group of Corvallis vigilantes tarred and feathered Creffield and an apostle named Charles Edward Brooks and told them to leave town and if they ever came back 'they would be hanged to the nearest tree' (1/8/1904). The next day reportedly still reeking of pine tar, Creffield married Maude Hurt, Berry's former fiancée, at the Albany Court house (1/6/1904). Creffield was eventually sentenced to two years in the Oregon State Penitentiary for committing adultery with his wife's aunt, Donna Mitchell Starr. After his release in 1906, he began re-assembling his flock on the Oregon coast. Some of the related menfolk got wind of this, armed and in a fury, they went after him causing him to go on the run. While walking down 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue in Seattle with his wife Maud, he was shot



Franz Edmund Creffield at the Oregon State Penitentiary, 1904.

dead by George Mitchell, the brother of Esther Mitchell, age 18, one of his most ardent followers whom Creffield allegedly sexually exploited. George stated that 'he had been commanded by God to put Creffield off this earth'. A witness at the subsequent trial said that 'Creffield had selected Esther to be the mother of a new savior who was to be sent into the world by God' (7/10/1906). Berry traveled to Seattle and testified for the defense in George's trial describing how he had initially been a supporter of Creffield until "he told me that he needed money to build a tabernacle" and "that I must sell all my valuables, including my automobile, and give the money to him. . . . Then Creffield and I had a falling out, as I would not do the things he said" (7/10/1906). In response, Creffield threatened that God would "smite" him.

The jury found George Mitchell not guilty – not by reason of insanity – but just plain not guilty - even though he admitted that he had shot Creffield and showed no remorse. They apparently concluded it was justifiable homicide and he was released from jail. However, two days later Ester Mitchell shot and killed her brother in the Seattle Union Station using a gun provided by Maud Creffield. Both Esther and Maud were charged with murder, but Maud committed suicide in her jail cell by ingesting strychnine. Washington State officials decided that Esther was insane and ruled that she should spend the rest of her life at the state hospital at Steilacoom (1/11/1906). However, by 1909 the superintendent there determined that Esther's health had improved significantly and that her mental issues were resolved. Consequently, she was granted parole with the stipulation that O.V. Hurt (who was now living in Newport) would be her guardian and she would be sent back to the hospital if her symptoms returned. Orlando Victor Hurt was Maud's father and at one point was involved in the cult. However, possibly influenced by Berry<sup>2</sup>, he came to oppose it and the involvement of his daughter Maud and son Frank with Creffield.

So, what does this have to do with the future Jim the Fixer? Although his former fiancée, Maud, committed suicide, he must have had a continuing relationship with the Hurt family with whom he had lived in Corvallis. And lo and behold in 1914 it was reported that Esther Ann Mitchell (1888-1914) (now out of the insane asylum) and living with the Hurt family in Newport and James K. Berry of Waldport, were married and that both were 'quite well known in Corvallis, where they formerly resided.' Miss Mitchell, age 27, was described as the 'prettiest girl in Yachats, where she has lived for four years.' That marriage was brief, however, as it was reported that Esther Mitchell-Berry of "Holy Roller" fame and well known in Corvallis killed herself at Waldport by taking strychnine. 'She was married but a few weeks ago to James Berry, and previous to this had been a quiet and respected resident of Waldport' (8/3/1914).

So, what comes next? On April 4, 1916, in Lincoln City, Berry married Esther's sister, Donna Mitchell (Starr), another devoted Creffield follower! In fact, Donna was Maud's aunt whom Creffield was sent to prison for committing adultery with! The mother of three, she was divorced from Ebenezer Burgess "Burt" Starr a brother of O.V. Hurt's wife. Donna and James had a business in Yachats, however he drank heavily, was abusive, and they divorced in 1919. Then in 1920, he was back in Corvallis working with a former employer and newly married, 'James K. Berry repair man at M.M. Long & Company sporting goods store' married Mrs. Alice Kent (11/18/1920). His new wife was a Christian Scientist and Berry continued to drink heavily, apparently had affairs, and she filed for divorce in 1927. Although prohibition (1920 – 1933) had



*Evening Telegram*

**James. K. Berry and Clara Berry**



Jim, his first wife Clara, third wife Esther, sixth wife Molly.



just arrived, he made his own home brew. In one instance, 45 gallons of beer and wine he was brewing was discovered resulting in a \$50 fine (11/3/1921). In 1930 he again became entangled with another member of the Holy Roller cult; 'James K. Berry, more familiarly here known as 'Jim the Fixer' married Mollie A. Sandell Hurt' (1882-1959) (2/5/1930) who he probably had known for almost 30 years. Mrs. Hurt's first husband, Franklin Clarence Hurt, who accidentally shot and killed himself while working as a trapper in 1920, was the brother of Maud Hurt, the wife of the "Holy Roller" cult leader Franz Creffield described above (and Jim's former fiancée). Both Frank and Mollie had been members of the Creffield cult (7/10/1906) and J. K. Berry had been one of the witnesses that caused them both to be committed to the Oregon Insane Asylum because of their behavior with the cult. Also later in that same year, in a complication that genealogy aficionados love, Mr. Berry's son Kenneth married his step sister, Esther Hurt. As the GT described it, Esther Hurt 'was both the step-daughter and daughter-in-law' of the elder Mr. Berry. Tragically, a few months later she died of influenza (1/26/1931) followed by Kenneth Berry who was killed along with 3 passengers when the car he was driving rounded a curve at high speed and crashed into the back of a parked gravel truck near Yachats on the Coast Highway (9/14/1931).

In summary, Jim married Clara (1904), Hortense (before 1910), Esther (1914), Donna (1916), Alice (1920), and finally Mollie (1930) with Esther, Donna, and Mollie all being former members of the Creffield cult. Berry retired from being 'Jim the Fixer/Fix'r' in 1931. What motivated this is unclear as he was about 53. His wife Mollie was reportedly from a wealthy family that owned considerable property in Seattle. He passed away in 1943 and was survived by Mollie and a daughter, Mrs. John Hyde (Nema Louise Berry) (1/18/1943).

So, who was Jim the Fixer/Fix'r? He appeared to have been one of those people with an innate intelligence - able to understand and embrace the emerging technologies of the era with little or no formal training. He was also sociable, charismatic, humorous as evident from his ads and poetry, and likely had a personal magnetism, but also may have been demanding and difficult to live with. By 1903 he had a motor bike (that he crashed), had constructed a motorboat and was hauling rafts of logs on the river, owned an Oldsmobile, and then there is the picture of him in the pilot seat of a 1910 seaplane forced to land near Waldport<sup>5</sup>. He went from being a 'day laborer' (age 21) in the 1900 census to Corvallis fire chief five years later and he used his mechanical skills to design a cart for the transport of fire extinguishers and enjoyed favorable press being referred to as the 'well known bicycle dealer and general expert...' (4/8/1904). It was the cusp of the machine age and the hit song in 1905 was 'In my merry Oldsmobile' He appeared



to be positioned for a bright and prosperous career. But then just as he started his business and entered public life, Creffield appeared and may have haunted the rest of his life. The son of a minister, Berry may have had a conflicted religious streak that led to the Creffield attraction. However, the demand that he part with his Oldsmobile might have been the last straw – he was willing to risk the wrath of the Almighty to keep his wheels; the successful wooing of his fiancée, Maud Hurt, by Creffield could have also caused lingering resentment. This may have contributed to Berry's darker, complicated, unbalanced side, as evident from his six marriages, four of which were to likely unstable individuals. However, people relied on him to fix their machines and they may have overlooked his flaws because of their dependence.

About the Jim the Fix'r sign. Neon signs were first developed around 1910 and were popular from the 1920s to the 1960s. The first neon sign in Corvallis was at the 'new Corvallis Hotel building' (10/22/1927). A few months later the second was installed at the Golden Pheasant Restaurant (2/9/1928). Later in that year one was installed at the Allen Drug Store and it was noted that it was 'one of approximately ten [installed] in recent months' (11/3/1928). A company in Eugene, the Eugene Neon Sign Co., was installing signs in Corvallis in 1931 and possibly earlier (5/13/1931). Although it was not known which Jim the Fixer had the sign made, or when it was installed, always the innovator, gadgeteer, and prolific advertiser, Berry probably could not resist and his may have been one of the 10 installed in 1928. Also because of his advertised skill in brazing, he may have constructed the sign.

And about that apostrophe. Clearly, Berry adopted his nickname from 'Tilly the fixer' who employed him for three years. But Fix'r? Berry spent much of his life surrounded by or married to insanely (literally) devout individuals. A common hymnal of the day and reportedly the choice for Creffield's cult was *Bible Songs of Salvation and Victory, for God's People of Every Land: Suitable for Revivals, the Church, Sunday-Schools and the Home* by Martin Wells Knapp. Some of the hymns are peppered with contracted words. For example, some excerpts:

No.51 *O it is wonderful*

He so't and found me, sav'd me ... and bro't me near



Yielding to Jesus ev'ry ransom'd pow'r  
He may thro' grace

I didn't spend much time on this, but I can imagine a hymn that would include, for example: '  
He repair'd my heart and fix'd my soul'

Unfortunately, I can't think of one that uses fix'r ... but it may be out there...

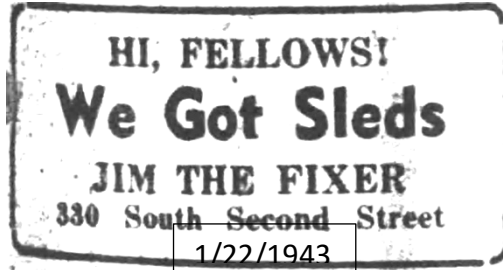
## Jim the Fixer/Fix'r II

James K. Berry would be a hard act of follow. So, who was the second incarnation of Jim the Fixer/Fix'r? Lawrence E Howard (1909-1985) began as an apprentice locksmith in 1924 and purchased Jim's the Fix'r's shop in about 1931 and adopted the name 'Jlm'. He continued advertising in the GT as Jim the Fix'r for a few years, but after about 1934, other than the two ads shown from 1943 and 1944, he did not advertise in the newspaper. He was very active in



Dictator L. E. Howard

Mr. Howard has been elected dictator of Corvallis lodge for the year of 1937. He not only encourages his brothers in the organization work, but does some real organization work himself. He is West Moose in Beaver Legion.



Public Is Barred  
From Bicycle Shop

8/8/1972

Cleanup Feud Continues 10/16/1973

*'A Matter Of Principle'*

Jim The Fix'r Saga

10/18/1973

*Judge Draws The Line*

the local Moose lodge for many years and was elected 'Dictator' in 1937 and by 1964 had risen to be 'Deputy Grand Moose North, Pilgrim Degree' (8/14/1964).

In 1965, he was elected president of the Pacific Locksmith association of Oregon. Although located at 330 SW 2<sup>nd</sup> for many years, by 1965 his shop was at 115 NW 2<sup>nd</sup>. One eye-witness described his shop as follows: "'Shop" is far too tame a word for Jim the Fix'r's place. It was a museum, a wilderness, a stopping point for bicycles awaiting reincarnation. In the dim and seemingly endless recesses of back rooms, great tangled piles of bicycle skeletons stretched toward the high ceiling. Every available inch of floor and wall space was covered with tools, spare parts, cables, gears and unidentifiable pieces of machinery' (6/25/2016).

In keeping with what one might expect from a fixer, he had a cantankerous streak. In 1972 his shop was condemned because 'bicycle parts are stored in a manner which makes exit from the building hazardous'. He was allowed to continue his business, but the public was not allowed into the building (8/9/1972). This forced him to operate from the doorway as he refused on 'principle' to clear 'a pathway ... wide enough to satisfy the city fire code' (10/16/1973). Shortly thereafter, a court order mandated that a city maintenance crews clean up the shop. However, he refused to allow them entry so a \$50/day fine was imposed - all fines to be suspended if the shop was cleaned up.

By October 25, 1973, Mr. Howard capitulated, cleaned his shop, met the fire code, and the case was closed. Other than that, with only a single wife for over 50 years, two children, and living in only two Corvallis residences (624 SW 11<sup>th</sup> and 1130 NW Beca), Mr. Howard led a quiet life compared to the original Jim the Fixer. The last record of his shop being open was in 1982 (2/27/1982) and it was replaced by Cycle Sport in 1983 (5/24/1983). The last report of Howard acting as Jim the Fixer was when the authorities asked for information about a key found associated with the skeleton of a murder victim. It was stamped with the Jim the Fix'r name and a unique number code, however, unfortunately the information was of no use 'because Howard no longer has his records' (1/12/1985). Later that year Howard passed away.



1972. 115 NW 2nd

## About the sources

The dates in brackets are from the Corvallis Gazette Times (GT) archives and refer to it and its predecessors.

I tried to steer clear of detailed information on the Holy Rollers as they are well-documented.

For a brief overview Wikipedia is a good start.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund\\_Creffield](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Creffield)

A more detailed overview is available from a two-part series from 2011 by Finn J. D. John

<http://www.offbeatoregon.com/o1106a-bride-of-christ-holy-rollers-in-covallis-ending.html>

<https://offbeatoregon.com/o1105e-bride-of-christ-holy-rollers-in-covallis-beginning.html>

There are several books on the topic.

1. "Holy Rollers: Murder and Madness in Oregon's Love Cult," co-written by Robert Blodgett and Theresa McCracken, Caxton Press, 2002.

[https://mchumor.com/edmundcreffield.com/holyrollers\\_newspapers\\_1903\\_06\\_10.html](https://mchumor.com/edmundcreffield.com/holyrollers_newspapers_1903_06_10.html)

2. Murdering holiness : the trials of Franz Creffield and George Mitchell (2003). By Phillips, Jim. Vancouver : UBC Press.

3. Vigilante newspapers : a tale of sex, religion, and murder in the Northwest (2005) By Baldasty, Gerald J. Seattle : University of Washington Press.

4. Marlene McDonald, a volunteer at the Benton County Historical Museum, wrote and self-published "Roll Ye Sinners Roll, The Story of the Creffield Cult, Corvallis, Oregon 1903-1906."

5. The Land that Kept its Promise: A History of South Lincoln County. 1976, by Marjory H. Hays. Lincoln County Historical Society.

6. Review of film 'How the Fires Fell'

[https://www.gazettetimes.com/entertainment/how-the-fire-fell-a-film-by-edward-p-davee/article\\_fd3cb282-22a9-11e1-88f0-001871e3ce6c.html](https://www.gazettetimes.com/entertainment/how-the-fire-fell-a-film-by-edward-p-davee/article_fd3cb282-22a9-11e1-88f0-001871e3ce6c.html)



Milton-Grandma & Esther BERRY  
*Conn & Underwood* Corvallis, Or.



James K. Berry family: Susan M. Brice Berry (1850-1903), Milton Dean Berry (1883-1934), Esther Fidema Berry (1880-1974) and Jacob L. Berry (1838-1885). Esther married George H. Carl in 1900 and he was a partner with James in his bicycle shop for a time.



The probable Berry house (see arrow) at 402 SW 10<sup>th</sup> (the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and Adams). It was sold to Washington 'Dick' Tom in 1905. Mr. Tom was married to Adeline Berry who was probably related to J. K. Berry, but I have been unable to determine the relationship. The Toms apparently replaced it with another house after 1912. Also shown from right to left are the depot (now located at 7<sup>th</sup> and Washington; Good Samaritan Episcopal Church (now located at 7<sup>th</sup> and Madison as the Corvallis Arts Center; the Court House, and the Corvallis School (now Central Park). Photo ca 1906.

**SAY !**

Take a look at the

**Raycycle-  
Bicycle**

The strongest and easiest running wheel on the market.

**IT RUNS  
27% EASIER**

than any other wheel.

Guaranteed for 12 months.

Call and see them.

**\$40., \$45. and \$50.**

**J. K. BERRY**

AND

**G. H. CARL**

AGENTS.

We also have the

**Reading  
Standard  
Bicycle**

The wheel that holds the most world's records of any wheel built.

**\$30. \$35. \$40.**

No "trust" wheel when you buy a wheel of us.

You get a

**1904 Wheel**

not a 1903 wheel with a

**1904 Price**

We have the finest line of sundries and parts in the city.

Call and see us, as we are

**In the Business**

**To DO Business !**

**BERRY & CARL.**

**C. M. VIDITO**

**For Bicycles, Ammunition,  
Fishing Tackle,  
Sporting Goods, Etc.**

**J. K. Berry, Salesman..**

The Right Prices. All Fresh Goods.  
Two Doors South of the Post Office.

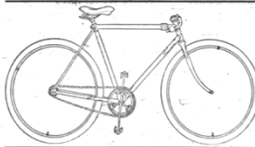
**The Big Thing is Now On.**

**= Berry Has in His =**

**Rambler**

**Racycle**

**Tribune**



AND

**Barnes**

**Bicycles.**

If you want a Fine, Up-to-date High Grade Bicycle, go to Berry's.

If you want a Good Cheap Guaranteed Bicycle, go to Berry's.

If you want a Second-Hand Bicycle, go to Berry. He has them at any old price.

If you are thinking of buying a wheel, call on Berry before you purchase. He has them ranging in price from \$5.00 to \$200.00.

If your wheel needs doctoring, take it to the Bicycle Hospital. All work guaranteed.

If you need a new set of tires, go to Berry. He has them of all makes and prices.

If you want to rent a wheel, go to Berry's.

In fact, if you want anything in the line of Bicycles, Sundries, Parts, or Repair Work, go to Berry's. Near Barnett Brick, Main Street, Corvallis, Oregon.

**Longs Bicycle Store**

Having bought the J. K. Berry bicycle Store and repair shop, I have added a \$1,200 stock of

**NEW GOODS**

which are now on display. Watch my ad for further announcements. Don't forget I have a first class repair shop.

**M. M. LONG, Prop.**

James Berry had a variety of partnerships during his first bicycle business. It may have initially been owned with his brother Milton, as the Berry Bros Bicycle shop. He also partnered with George Heartness Carl (1876 – 1963) who was his brother-in-law – married to his sister Esther. In September 1903, he sold his interest in the shop only to buy it back in April of 1904. It is unclear what his relationship with C.M. Vidito was. In September 1904, when Berry was elected fire chief both Mr. Carl and Mr. Vidito were elected 'captains'. Clockwise from left Ads are from 4/12/1904, 4/22/1905, 3/28//1903 and 9/16/1906 when he sold his shop to Mr.

Having been tipped off that various and sundry good friends of Jim Barry had been spending very late hours at his home on First street between Madison and Jefferson, and suspicioning that there might be a liquid reason, Chief of Police Robinson went over Wednesday afternoon and called on him. Jim didn't care to have any official visitors, said so in no uncertain

**HOME BREW GETS  
LOCAL RESIDENT  
A \$50.00 FINE**

---

**Jim Barry Makes a Whole Lot  
of O Be Joyful Juice and  
Chief Makes Visit**

---

**SEVERAL GALLONS SPILLED**

---

**Booze Is Given Short Stay In City  
Jail, and Then Dumped Into  
Raging Willamette**

---

Having been tipped off that various and sundry good friends of Jim Barry had been spending very late hours at his home on First street between Madison and Jefferson, and suspicioning that there might be a liquid reason, Chief of Police Robinson went over Wednesday afternoon and called on him. Jim didn't care to have any

official visitors, said so in no uncertain tones, stood on his rights, and then the chief asserted himself by securing City Attorney Jay Lewis and a search warrant. Then he called at the Barry home and after some argumentation was permitted to snoop around into all the corners. The net result was the finding of no small quantity of home brew, a mixture of berries and other fruit that had produced what Chief Robinson says was about the most undrinkable wine he ever tasted—but the visitors had seemed to like it. There were three jars of the wine dope—one of 20 gallons, one of 10 gallons and one of three. There were two kegs, one of 10 gallons and one of five. Some of this was a so-called beer, and some of it was in mash form. Chief Robinson asked Mr. Barry to come with him and appear before Municipal Judge Conner, and he had the booze brought to the city jail, where he locked it up on a charge of being out of order in this day and age. Judge Conner made the usual inquiry, then assessed the brewer \$50. He paid up and escaped a stay in jail along with the home brew. This latter was taken from the jail this afternoon and dumped into the river.

11/3/1921

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## Chapter 6

### At OSU, A Bronze Bust Staring South: B. F. Irvine, a Crusading Newspaper Editor

#### in Corvallis and Portland

December 9, 2022

#### A bronze bust staring south

I have been associated with Oregon State University for almost 50 years. Occasionally I went to the grand lounge on the main floor of Memorial Union, but I never noticed a bronze bust of a man staring towards the south windows - ignoring everyone as they ignore him. As in the subject's life, the bust stares, but does not see; it represents a blind man. This is the story of the life of Benjamin Franklin 'Frank' Irvine (1857-1940) who was born in Scio and how and why this sculpture resides in the Memorial Union.



#### Frank's Father, Jesse Baird Irvine (1832-1913).

J. B. Irvine was born in Elkton, Ky in 1832 and at age 19 married a neighbor girl and settled near his mother and brothers in Gentry County, Missouri. His wife passed away and within a year the family went west to Oregon (EKC) and he staked a land claim near Scio. In 1854 he married Sarah Emaline Humphreys (1837 - 1912). He was a Republican and reportedly left the South because he didn't like the way slaves were treated and as one writer put it, he was 'one of those with no use for a corkscrew' which meant he did not drink (5/21/1913). He seems to have been something of a dreamer always seeking a new opportunity and always involved in local politics. He reportedly served as mayor (at different times) of Scio, and Brownsville, Oregon and Sprague, Washington Territory, and was on the Corvallis City Council for many years. In Scio he was the post master for 15 years along with having a livery stable and a store. He was a miner near Jacksonville, and owned a dairy and worked at a creamery in Sprague (5/21/1913). In addition, he was from a very influential family. His sister, Mary South Irvine, married Charles Claggett and their grandson, who would have been a contemporary of B. F. Irvine, was Charles Linza McNary (1874-1944) a distinguished US Senator from Oregon who served from 1917 to 1944. He was Senate Minority Leader from 1933 to 1944 and the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate alongside Wendell Wilkie in 1940. He has a Columbia River dam named after him.



Top: Bust in OSU Memorial Union. Bottom: photo of B.F. Irvine.

### **Benjamin Franklin Irvine: Growing up and going to school**

B. F. Irvine was the eldest of six surviving children and spent his early years in two different Oregon locations. Although born and spending time in Scio, Oregon, he also lived near Jackass (now Forest) Creek and went to school in Logtown, a village in SW Oregon near Jacksonville that no longer exists. His father, who was described in a local newspaper as a 'rainbow-chasing' miner, worked a claim there. In later years Frank reportedly enjoyed emphasizing his Jackass Creek roots when discussing his childhood in polite and other company. The Medford Mail Tribune, the nearby newspaper, proudly regarded him as 'one of its most distinguished sons' and he apparently visited friends there often (5/2/1940, MMT). Later back in Scio, his father financed a small local newspaper that failed and at a very young age, Frank took it over, learned to set type, and produced a four-column paper and named it the 'Semi Occasional'. He reportedly could clear up to \$4 an issue from sales and ads, but it eventually faded away because he needed to concentrate on his studies (MW). However, he continued writing and began sending news stories to surrounding papers in larger cities. In one instance, an article he wrote at age 13 about a house fire was published by the Albany, Oregon Democrat. He was apparently a good student and ball player and he went to Willamette University (WU) where he played baseball and received a B. S. degree in 1877 at age about 20. He also received an A. M. degree in history in 1899 from Willamette University described as a 'reading course' with a thesis (1/16/1899). Unfortunately, WU does not have a record of this thesis so the title and content are unknown. Later he was awarded honorary doctorates from WU and Oregon Agricultural College (OAC was the precursor of Oregon State College [OSC] and later Oregon State University [OSU]).

### **Teaching and the railroad and telegraph years, 1877-1885**

After graduating from Willamette University, Frank taught in Scio but left after a year due to a conflict over his salary. He then studied the Morse Code until he could stand outside a nearby Western Union office and decipher the dispatches. This led to a job as a relief operator filling in for telegraphers who went on vacation. When the new Western Oregon Railroad (W.O.R.R.) depot opened in Corvallis in early 1880, he was hired as the station master and telegrapher and was involved in ticketing and dealing with freight, in addition to manning the telegraph (MW). This station was the first in Corvallis and was located on the west side of the tracks near the



The W.O.R.R. Corvallis train depot where Irvine worked as station agent and telegrapher starting in 1880. It was located near SW 6<sup>th</sup> St. and SW B.

junction of SW 6<sup>th</sup> and SW B Ave. His work there sparked a lifetime interest and understanding of railroads. During his spare time at the station, he wrote for a local newspaper although this cannot be confirmed because credits were not given. However, since he was aware of all the telegraphic communication to and from Corvallis and being at the train station, he was also familiar with the important and not so important people traveling to and from Corvallis, he never would have had a shortage of material.

### **Going Blind (1883 – 1903).**

A commonly related story is that early in Irvine's time as a railroad agent and telegrapher, he was involved in a friendly boxing match in a baggage car with a powerfully built train fireman and he was hit hard in his left eye that caused serious damage. This led first to the decline of vision in the injured eye and eventually the other as well. It is not clear how trauma to one eye would affect the other and he may have coincidentally had a form of progressive degenerative eye disease that led to his vision problems. He mentioned in an interview that even before the accident, he never had very good eyesight (MW). He went to Portland to see an eye specialist in 1883 (7/6/1883) and San Francisco in 1886 (2/12/1886), 1898 (Lincoln Co. Leader (9/2/1898), and 1900 (The Eug. Guard (2/5/1900). It was also reported in the late 1890s he went to New York to consult a famed oculist, Dr. Herman Knapp (EKC 1940; MW). There is a note in the Albany paper stating 'B.F. Irvine and daughter, Miss Edna, Geo. W. Irvine, and Walter G. Keady of Corvallis, came over Saturday evening on bicycles, and visited friends in this city' (8/5/1898 Aly Democrat) suggesting that he had at least enough vision in 1898 to steer a bicycle for 12 miles over what were probably not particularly good roads. It is generally stated that his sight gradually declined over a 12-year period until suddenly over a few days he became totally blind probably at about age 38. However, if the bicycle trip is true, this must have occurred after age 41. It was also implied in another article that he went blind in 1903 (age 46) (OJ 2/22/1935). Certainly, his signature on the City Council minutes when he was Mayor in 1903 might suggest very diminished vision, although signatures from people with perfect vision are often worse. Subsequently, he maintained that going blind was a relief because such a large part of his life had been consumed by worry and failed attempts to prevent the decline over those 12 years (MW). As he gradually lost his sight, his wife Trudy, faithfully assisted him as best she could and she took care of the business side of his various ventures that are described below.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "B.F. Irvine" on the top line and "Mayor" on the bottom line.

### **Marriage and Family.**

In 1883, at age 26, he married Gertrude Avery (1867 – 1954) who was 15. She was the youngest child of Joseph and Martha Avery (Joseph is considered to be the founder of Corvallis). Since the age of consent in almost all states including Oregon in 1880 was either 10 or 12, there might not have been anything unusual about marriage at age 15. However, appended to the marriage license is a signed and witnessed note from Martha Avery, Gertrude's mother, authorizing and consenting to the marriage<sup>1</sup>. There was strong societal pressure in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to raise the age of consent and it is not clear whether there were local variations in Oregon, but by 1906 it had been raised to 16, at least in Corvallis (10/28/1906). The marriage license signing was held at the Avery home and there was no announcement or description that I could find in the local papers. About seven and a half months later on June 15, 1884, their daughter Edna was born. It is unclear whether this was a forced marriage, but it lasted until Mr. Irvine passed away in 1940. Edna (1884-1968) was valedictorian of her Corvallis graduating class

of 33 in 1899, attended OAC, spent a year at Emerson's School of Oratory in Boston, and studied acting and performed with a famed stage actress, Rose Eyttinge. In 1906, she starred as an ingenue in the political comedy, 'A Square Deal', with a road company on the east coast. In 1907, she was in 'The Other Girl', another comedy that played at the Belasco Theater in Washington, D.C. An advertisement including a picture of her reflected in a mirror as 'Edna Irvine, A noted theatrical star' endorsing an anti-dandruff hair treatment was featured in many newspapers throughout North America in 1907. During the summer of 1907, probably July (7/23/1907) she met Horace Kerr (1886-1917), a Stanford University graduate and son of the OAC president, W. J. Kerr. Shortly thereafter, Edna went to Chicago to pursue her acting career and Horace went to Madison to further his studies. They met again there and a few weeks later were married in a 'surprise wedding' (10/18/1907). William Jasper Kerr (1863-1947) and his wife Leonora Deseret



Edna Irvine. 1906 Oregon girl makes hit as ingenue in 'A square deal'.

Hamilton Kerr (1865-1963) had six children and a very complicated religious background. They were raised in the Mormon Church during the time when polygamy was common and W. J. Kerr took a second wife with whom he had a son and a daughter. In 1898, after the church renounced plural marriage in order to gain statehood, he divorced his second wife. This was apparently so traumatic it caused Kerr and his wives to leave the LDS Church<sup>2</sup>. It is not clear if the Kerr family's complicated religious background affected the Irvine-Kerr marriage which was brief. Horace and Edna are mentioned together in early 1908, but that stopped later in the year. In the 1910 census they were both listed as single with Edna living with her parents in Portland and working as a reporter and Horace living as a boarder at 329 10th Street in Corvallis and employed as a 'business manager at the college'. Later in 1910, he married Adma Green (1878 - 1949), an art instructor at OAC (2/27/1910) who graduated from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1908. Horace had chronic health problems and passed away in 1917 (12/6/1917). Despite the outcome of the Irvine-Kerr marriage, it must be noted that later in life when Frank Irvine was an influential editor of the *Oregon Journal* and member of the OAC Board of Regents, he was strongly allied with President Kerr in the battles over the organization of higher education in Oregon (see below). Edna Irvine went on to write a woman's column in the *Oregon Journal* under the pen name 'Darra More' from 1910 to 1912. On Christmas day 1910, she married Thomas S. McGrath, a Portland business man involved in lumber trading and shipping and a noted judge of fine horses and president of the Portland Hunt Club. They divorced in 1916 (OJ 7/10/1916). She passed away in 1968 in Riverside, CA. Another Irvine child, Ward Avery Irvine, was born in 1895. He attended OAC where he played football and then went to Columbia University; during WWI he served in navy intelligence under Franklin Roosevelt (8/5/1934). He worked as a reporter and editorial writer for the *Oregon Journal* and in 1924 served as private secretary to Oregon Governor Walter Pierce. He married Lucille Sievers in 1922 (2/18/1922) followed in 1931 by Mildred Weeks (12/19/1931) who was the society editor for the *Oregon Journal*. In the 1940 census he was listed as divorced and living with his parents. He passed away in 1944 at age 49 (O 10/8/1944; GT10/10/1944).

### The shoe store years, 1885 -1888.

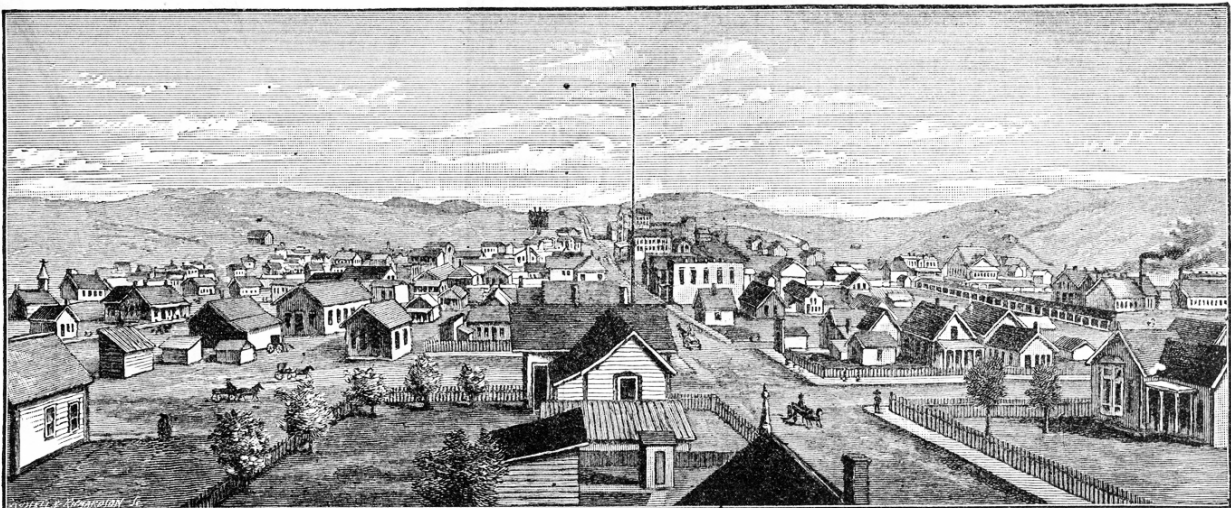
In May of 1885, after about five and a half years, Frank left telegraphy and the train depot and went into the boot and shoe business with his brother-in-law Napoleon Bonaparte Avery as Avery & Irvine. This work probably sounded attractive initially because it might have been more compatible with his declining vision, however, he found he was totally lacking in any business interest or instinct. I could find only four newspaper ads (all in May 1885) over the three years he was involved in this business. In addition, his vision continued to decline to such an extent that he could not read the numbers on the shoe boxes and had to have them rewritten in a larger size. After about three years in the shoe business, the shop was sold to Jackson P. Irvine and Mrs. F. A. Helm in March of 1888. They were a cousin of Frank's and a sister of Napoleon, respectively.

**AVERY & IRVINE,**  
(Successors to S. H. Look,)  
**Cash Dealers In**  
**BOOTS and SHOES.**

---

**Prices as Low as the Lowest.**  
**The Largest Stock in the City.**  
**The Best Workman in the State.**

CORVALLIS, - OREGON.



Sprague, Washington Territory, 1888.

### To the Palouse: A dairy farm near Sprague, Washington, 1888 – 1892

At 36 miles southwest of Spokane and some 400 miles from Corvallis, it is unclear how Frank's father came to own a dairy farm in Sprague, Washington Territory. In the 1880s, it was in a major wheat growing region, the seat of Lincoln County, a Northern Pacific Railroad center with a round house (WikPed), and was connected by rail to Portland and Corvallis. Jesse talked Frank into moving and working his dairy farm and a doctor apparently encouraged Frank because it would not involve as much strain on his eyes as other occupations. In contrast to Jesse, there are no reports I could find of Frank in Sprague other than an indication that he was managing 20 or 50-60 dairy cows (MW) (11/2/1888), depending on the source, on 1000 acres with Trudy acting as the cowgirl (EKC). That seems like a lot dairy cows to manage and a very large acreage and it is not clear how accurate those reports are. It is hard to imagine, considering his future as a newspaper editor, the drudgery of milking multiple cows every morning and night. It would

involve finding the cow, leading her to and locking her head into a stanchion, distracting her with food, washing her udder, and then squirting the milk into a bucket for maybe 20 or 30 minutes until she was empty. Also, some inexperienced cows not used to the process or others that just have a bad attitude can kick over the milk bucket and make other sorts of trouble. Also, for a successful dairy, there needs to be a rotating set of cows producing milk, and others pregnant who would become productive when the others go dry. Therefore, a bull is necessary and they can be cantankerous and must be handled with care. In the Palouse, they might have been able to pasture the cows in the summer, but in the winter, they have to be fed hay that would need to be either purchased or cultivated, mowed, collected and stored out of the weather. The milking part is something that would not require good eyesight – just make certain the milk goes in the bucket which he could tell by the sound it makes. Frank must have had a lot of help not only with handling the animals, but also with milking if the dairy had 20 or even 10 milking cows at a time. To manage the dairy farm, Frank would have needed the help of others. Trudy, Frank's wife, Edna age 4-8 years old during their time there, and members of Jesse's family were likely involved. According to an 1887 Sprague census, Jesse was living there with his wife and five children aged 11, 14, 20, 23, and 26 and both Jesse and J. D. age 26 are listed as 'dairyman'. All of Jesse's family could have helped out if they all lived together or near Frank. It was reported that Frank could milk cows and dig post holes as long as he had someone to point him in the right direction (MW). Although there are no records I could find of Frank on the farm, there are a few news reports about his father both in Spokane area papers and back in Oregon. Jesse served as mayor (5/19/1913) and managed the Sprague Creamery & Cold Storage Company. According to one report it produced 500 pounds of butter day and Irvine had a reputation in horticultural journals as being the best butter maker in the west (SR 5/30/1889). It is not clear where he obtained that skill. In 1890, he was trying to move back to the Albany area and was soliciting the interest of investors in starting a creamery or a cannery there (State\_Rights\_democrat\_(5/30/1890); Lebanon\_Express\_6/6/1890). Also, it was reported in 1891 that he was being considered as a Farmer Alliance candidate for Washington State Governor (Lebanon\_Express\_8/7/1891). There were also a series of confusing reports of an accident that caused him to lose a finger. In one, he was referred to as the town marshal and 'peace keeper' suggesting that he had been elected to that position in Sprague or it might have been part of his mayoral duties (9/21/1889 SFR). The lost finger got the attention of journalists because he sued the Northern Pacific Railroad and headlines such as 'What are fingers worth?' (SR 9/30/1892) and 'Wants \$5000 for a finger' appeared (SR 4/15/1893). From a combination of these reports the following may have happened: Jesse was transferring a box of butter from a buggy to a depot platform as a train was approaching (9/21/1889 SFR). As the train neared the platform it released the steam that regulated its brakes making a screeching sound that spooked the horses causing them to wreck the wagon and injure Jesse resulting in one of his fingers being amputated (9/30/1892 the SR). There was a jury trial and he was awarded \$600 suggesting the jury was convinced that the train engineer was negligent (4/16/1893 SR). There are also a few reports suggesting that, although the creamery was modern and had recently been constructed at a cost of \$8000 (SFR 1/1/1890), it was not managed for the benefit of local farmers. For instance, in one report there were new owners who were using the place as a skimming factory and making cheese and butter elsewhere, plus at one point it was shut down for a time (SR 12/14/1894). Clearly that would be a disaster for a dairy farm where the cows needed to be milked constantly

and the milk needed to be processed almost immediately. One gets the impression that Jesse had gone from being a 'rainbow-chasing' miner at the gold fields of SW Oregon to a 'rainbow-chasing' dairyman in the dry hills of the Palouse. The dairy farm experience would have also impressed upon Frank the precarious nature of this profession and its dependence on the whims of investors whose main goal may not have been in the best interest of the small farmers. After over four years, the farm was not profitable, and as his sight progressively worsened, he decided in 1892 to return to Corvallis. At age about 35 and having been raised in a mining community, taught school, been a railroad station master and telegrapher, owned a shoe store, and now having spent over four long unsuccessful years working as a dairy farmer, he must have yearned for the days in his youth in Scio when he was a teenage reporter, so he decided to return to the newspaper business – not withstanding his continually deteriorating vision. Similarly, by 1895 Frank's father, Jesse, had also given up on dairy farming, and followed him to Corvallis, via for a time a detour to Joseph, Oregon where he had relatives and his brother-in-law, Thomas M. Humphreys, had been sheriff (6/21/1901;10/17/1913). In Corvallis, he continued his rainbow chasing as a Knights of the Maccabees promoter; they sold low-cost insurance (11/23/1897), strawberry farmer (7/1/1898), supervisor of Benton County bicycle paths (4/28/1899), lumberyard manager (9/25/1901), and politics - Republican candidate for county coroner (5/4/1900), constable (11/11/1910), and city councilor.

#### **Irvine purchases the *Benton Leader* and the *Corvallis Times* (1893 – 1908)**

**The newspaper situation in Corvallis in 1893.** The late 1800s was a time of major turmoil in the Corvallis newspaper business. The *Corvallis Gazette* was started in 1862 as a pro-Lincoln and staunch Republican paper with T. B. Odeneal as the editor. Odeneal had previously edited the *Occidental Messenger*, a pro-slavery paper that was started by Joseph Avery in 1857, but he apparently had been converted to the Republican cause. The *Gazette* also supported prohibition which took a certain amount of courage since it was reported that half the businesses in Corvallis at that time were saloons. The construction of the Oregon Pacific Railroad with its intent on being the western terminus of a transcontinental railroad dominated much of the commercial thought and had major political influence in the 1880s and executives of the company had controlling interests in both the *Gazette* and another paper, the *Benton Leader* (3/21/1894). However, as the railroad floundered and went bankrupt, the owners of the *Gazette* supported a Democrat for state senator who was more supportive of the failing railroad than his Republican rival. This angered Republicans including the *Gazette* editor and he quit and with others started a new paper, the *Chronical*, in 1886. Its presence was brief as the railroad company bought up claims against it and forced it into bankruptcy. Robert Johnson, another former editor of the *Gazette*, bought it at a sheriff's auction in 1888 for \$610 (p. 23 7/24/1937) and renamed it the *Corvallis Times* with the motto "Independent, Fearless, and Free". This referred in particular to railroad influence. When Irvine bought the *Times*, he kept the motto. He reportedly paid \$5000 with \$1000 down - \$500 borrowed from a bank and \$500 loan from a grocer friend (mw). The other paper, the *Benton Leader*, was started in 1882 by W. H. Mansfield and was also affiliated with the Oregon Pacific Railroad. In 1884 W.W. Saunders was brought on as both a partner and editor. In early November, 1885, he shot and killed a man in Albany in a conflict over a woman. With Saunders jailed, Mansfield replaced him with Martin Luther Pipes in 1886. (Saunders was sentenced to death but later pardoned). Corvallis had electricity by 1889 (5/24/1889;7/24/1937)

and Pipes installed a \$2000 power press, the first in Corvallis, but left in 1893 when he was appointed a circuit court judge(Turnbull<sup>3</sup>). The power press, if it came with the purchase of the *Benton Leader*, may explain why Irvine bought the two newspapers and did not revive the *Leader*. In the meantime, the *Gazette* now under the ownership of Milton Sherman Woodcock (1849-1925) had recovered from its foray into supporting the pro-railroad Democrat and had returned to being a staunch Republican paper. In addition to the *Gazette*, Woodcock had interests in a law office, an insurance business, a drug store, a creamery, and also owned a bank (5/30/1902) which may explain the *Gazette's* pro-business Republican inclination.

The 1870s and 1880s were known as the gilded age, a period of economic optimism and rapid growth in the Northern and Western U.S. As a newly established town, Corvallis was caught up in this growth and there was a history of failed speculation including a 60,000 square foot wagon factory and several railroads located in Corvallis and the surrounding area. Much of the speculation came crashing down in the 'Panic of 1893' which led to a severe economic depression in the US and affected every sector of the economy. Amid this economic turmoil, Irvine who admittedly from his experience with the shoe store lacked an interest or instinct in the details of running a business, launched the next stage of his career with the purchase of the newspapers. His wife Gertrude ran the business side of the newspaper including ordering, subscriptions, bill collection, and payments and Irvine was, or became (5/30/1902), a staunch Democrat and prolific writer of editorials. He apparently attracted enough advertisement and subscription revenue that the paper that started out as a weekly, within a little over a year, by May 1894, was converted to a biweekly publication. Irvine normally penned an editorial on page 2 pointing out inequities in pending legislation, or behavior of the rich, that caused higher prices or affected the lives of the working class. He excoriated banks for speculation on get rich quick schemes rather than loaning money on property and safe securities causing the run on the banks that led to the current depression (9/6/1893). He routinely endorsed the Democratic slate of candidates on his editorial page and the *Gazette* did likewise for Republicans. He favored the Chinese Exclusion Act and also limits on the importation of masses of European labor, particularly Italians because they depressed the wages of American workers, and benefited big business. He was a strong supporter of President Cleveland's efforts to reduce tariffs and pointed out how they made overseas products uncompetitive and were exploited by large trusts to fix prices and over charge American consumers for their products. He followed the bankruptcy of the Oregon Pacific Railroad closely and criticized T. Egerton Hogg and his associates who ran the road into debt. When forced into bankruptcy he was justifiably critical when Hogg was appointed receiver resulting in a further debt of \$800,000. Upon the final settlement he supported compensation of the railroad workers and small businesses in the Corvallis area who were owed \$200,000 over large stockholders (12/13/1893)(1/3/1894) and was critical of the laws that prevented this from occurring when the railroad was finally sold (9/7/1895).

He took a special interest in the Oregon Agricultural College (OAC) and followed state appropriations carefully and criticized the college when he thought the money it received was not used wisely or as intended. This was particularly evident with the 'Model Dairy Farm' that was funded in 1889 and 1893 but hadn't been constructed by 1895 (6/17/1895). Clearly, he knew something about dairy farming and was probably interested in new innovations, or finding out what he had done wrong with his failed venture in Sprague. He read reports from the Experiment Station and commented on some of them in his paper such as Bulletin #36 on the composition



and use of fertilizers. He carefully followed the governance of the OAC and strongly protested the appointment in secret by Republican Governor William Paine Lord of a member of the OAC Board of Regents to the presidency of OAC in 1896. The man, H. B. Miller, was a sawmill owner with no academic training (7/16/1896; 7/25/1896) and a former member of the Oregon Legislature. He interpreted it as an attempt by the governor to shelve a political rival, and at the same time make the rival indebted to him. Irvine wrote of the selection that it was 'a brazen-faced political trick coarse enough for a clodhopper and vile enough for a ward-heeler, [that] drowned out the voice of general protest and placed at the head of the great college, a man strange to college life' (7/29/1896) (8/1/1896). Irvine's accusations of Governor Lord's conniving cleverness and political tricks were borne out when he subsequently dealt with Irvine, who was one of his loudest critics, by appointing him to the OAC Board of Regents in 1898! Within a year of OAC president Miller's appointment, he had been replaced by Thomas Gatch to widespread acclaim. Gatch was a former president of both Willamette University and the University of Washington with sterling academic credentials.

In a prescient editorial in 1900, he criticized the direction of intercollegiate athletics stating that if they are 'Pursued widely and long enough, the product would be a race of big muscled and little-headed men, an exaltation of the brute, a subordination of the better traits. The excitement and strain incident to intercollegiate matches is demoralizing to the student body of an educational institution. Trips in the early part of the year to various parts of the state ... essentially put students behind in their classes. The ground lost in studies ... early in the year follows them through commencement and to graduation...[and] intercollegiate contests induce gambling and rowdyism' (7/21/1900).

Irvine took particular umbrage of the local Republican politician Thomas H. Tongue who was elected to the US congress in 1896 by 63 votes. He reported that on the Siletz Indian reservation there were 106 Indian and 15 white voters and Tongue received 119 votes indicating that the 'camas eating Siletz Indians...saved him from ignominious defeat' (6/10/1896). Tongue supported making the Philippines a U.S. colony which Irvine strongly opposed citing the number of troops and cost that would be necessary to maintain control and that it would likely result in a flood of low wage workers coming to the US (10/10/1900). He also was scathing about Tongue's inability or lack of interest in obtaining funds for improving Yaquina Harbor (2/28/1900). Historically, Tongue was not a complete disappointment as he introduced bills to create Crater Lake National Park in 1898, 1899, and in 1901 when it was passed by Congress and became the fifth national park when President Roosevelt signed the bill into law.

Irvine was keenly interested in foreign affairs and wrote on the unfairness of the take-over of Hawaii by an extreme minority of Americans, due to a citizenship law allowed by queen Liliuokalani (12/6/1893) and deplored the massacre of civilian Chinese during the Boxer Rebellion. He wrote 'What wonder that they [the Chinese] prefer their own customs and religion to that Christianized civilization ... which revels in plunder and blood and death until justice weeps and the angel of peace shrieks for mercy' (6/28/1901). As stated above he opposed the colonization of the Philippines and also supported the independence of Cuba from Spain and lectured on the topic in Corvallis. The rival *Corvallis Gazette* newspaper described his presentation as follows: 'One of the most entertaining addresses ever delivered in Corvallis was that made by Mr. B.F. Irvine'...his topic was 'Cuba and the Colonists' and clearly described the inhumanity of the Spaniards towards Cuba. 'Mr. Irvine has a happy knack in choosing words and

his verbal paintings are full of beauty. He is a good reasoner and his deliver is attractive, forcible and often borders on the dramatic, holding the closest attention of every listener' (2/11/1898). In his later years Irvine became in great demand as a speaker on all manner of topics throughout the state.

His paper also featured some lighter topics such an essay deploring umbrella theft - 'It was William Shakespeare who said: "He who steals my purse steals trash, but he who steals my umbrella is a knock-kneed, low-down skunk," or words to that effect (2/23/1906)'.

Irvine left the *Times* in September of 1908 to take an editorial position at the *Oregon Journal* in Portland and leased it to N. R. Moore who purchased it the following year. That same year Charles L. Springer purchased the *Gazette* and started a daily edition on May 1, 1909. Combining the papers appealed to both Moore and Springer because neither had a plant capable of printing a daily paper. A coin was flipped and the new paper was called the *Gazette-Times* rather than vice versa with Moore as editor and Springer as publisher and the two papers were consolidated at 251 Madison and a linotype machine, the first in Corvallis, was installed (Turnbull<sup>3</sup>; 7/24/1937 p.43).

### **Corvallis Mayor (1903 – 1905)**

Irvine followed M.S. Woodcock, the editor of the *Gazette* as Corvallis Mayor, each running unopposed for two-year terms in 1901 and 1903, respectively (5/19/1903). Neither ran for a second term. There was an election in 1904 for several city council seats and J. B. Irvine, Frank's father, won the election for Ward 1. He served one year with Frank as Mayor and continued until he passed away in 1913.

The major issue that occupied much of the time of the council and Irvine's term as mayor was how to remedy the deficiencies of Corvallis water system. On this issue it is not possible to separate his advocacy for the project as mayor with that of his newspaper which he repeatedly used to explain the need and value for a new system. The problems had been noted for over 10 years before Irvine became mayor. On December 18, 1893 the city council passed an ordinance over the mayor's veto agreeing to purchase the system for \$28,000. The water company brought suit to enforce this ordinance and by (12/26/1896) the city had incurred \$1200 in lawyer's fees attempting to fend off the forced purchase. The water system was owned by Dr. George R. Farra, a prominent Corvallis physician and entrepreneur, and was critical for both providing water for the citizens and businesses and also water for cisterns and fire hydrants that were necessary for fighting fires.



Corvallis Water Company tower located between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> street and Adams.

The water storage system consisted of two 30,000-gallon tanks in a 70-ft tall water tower built in 1888 and located between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> St and Adams Ave. The water was drawn from the

Willamette River and the tanks were filled by a windmill on top of the building and two steam pumps at ground level. A report in July, 1903, noted that there were seven fire hydrants mostly in good condition, but the seven cisterns were of little value because they were too small and did not work well and had not been used for years. Because of these deficiencies, the Fire and Water Committee of the City Council recommended a major reduction from \$640 to \$400/year the city was paying the water company for providing water for this service (7/1/1903). Not surprisingly, the water company found this unacceptable (8/15/1903). An agreement had not been reached by mid-January 1904 and consequently Dr. Farra served notice to the city council that the water company would remove all the fire hydrants from the water mains on February 1, 1904 leaving the city unable to fight fires in a major area in the downtown (1/27/1904). The deficiencies of the Corvallis Water Company's supply included not only the non-functional cisterns, but also the amount and quality of the water it provided. For many years there had been a push to develop a supply independent of the Willamette River that would provide cleaner water. At the time the water from the river was minimally treated – possibly filtered to a certain extent, but not disinfected. People were well aware that often fatal diseases such as typhoid were water borne. Consequently, there had long been discussion of constructing a supply system from Rock Creek, that came from a watershed off Mary's Peak. There was extensive wrangling over how this system would be financed and whether it would be built by Dr. Farra's company or by the city. As early as December, 1894, Irvine had written multiple editorials in support of a public system and while mayor he hammered away in *Times* editorials from July, 1904 until a vote was held in November on both the poor quality of the current infrastructure and the water it delivered (7/27/1904;8/3/1904;8/31/1904). In one editorial he described the Willamette River as 'the sewer of the Willamette Valley. Growth of population and the natural tendency of people ... to get rid of filth and sewage will cause it to be used more and more as a general drain....Is this not a reason for Corvallisites to think...of ways ... for getting a water supply from the pure, uncontaminated streams of the mountains? Wouldn't Corvallis capital, rather than lie unused and dead in local banks better be invested in a mountain water system'...? (9/7/1904). He ran that editorial again on 10/10/1904. This was followed by a *Times* report describing a fire that destroyed a house due to lack of water pressure from a fire hydrant (9/10/1904). He further justified the mountain water system with a description of a chemical and bacterial analysis that showed the water to be of superior quality and purity (3/18/1905). The *Times* went all out in the issue before the election repeating and enumerating all the arguments in favor and pointing out a number of dead animals found floating in the Willamette any one of which if it died from tuberculosis, one part of its sputum in a solution of 400,000 parts water would be sufficient to infect a guinea pig (7/5/1905). The campaign prevailed when the citizens voted decisively 278 to 106 to issue \$75,000 in bonds for the system's construction (6/24/1905;7/7/1905). However, Dr. Farra was not about to give up without a fight. Shortly after the election his water company started digging up streets and extending some of its lines, even though the city was about to construct its own water system. One trench was 3 feet deep and extended from about 5<sup>th</sup> and Madison to 8<sup>th</sup> street and south to Adams indicating that Dr. Farra planned to directly compete with the new city water system. The right of the company to make the extensions and dig up streets was disputed with the city contending that this right had expired some years ago, while the company claimed a perpetual franchise. The members of the city council were unanimous in rejecting the company's interpretation of the contract and it was referred to the city attorney

who ordered a halt to the digging. The work continued and was stopped when the city arrested the 11 water company workers who were digging the trench (11/14/1905; 11/21/1905). Farra still persisted - he owned a water powered sawmill on Rock Creek and claimed rights to the water the city intended to divert to Corvallis and sued the City to stop construction and to prevent it from taking 'his' water. Another sawmill owner, J. E. Henkle, also brought suit and requested \$2500, but settled for \$700 (5/11/1906). Dr. Farra indicated he would drop his suit if the city paid him \$20,000 for his mill. He later reduced it to \$10,000 and then \$8,000 (4/17/1906). The city lacked the money, and in the meantime, there was a typhoid outbreak in Corvallis with a mother and three of her children of one family dying from the disease (4/10/1906). The court rejected Farra's suit because he could seek compensation through the courts if he could prove he suffered a loss (5/22/1906). Farra apparently eventually settled for \$1000 (1/1/1908). The public system was completed on budget by June of 1906 and included a pipeline extending 16 miles from the water source 980 feet above Corvallis near Mary's Peak and through 13 miles of water mains within the city feeding residential customers and initially 45 fire hydrants (6/21/1905). By 1916, the number of hydrants had expanded to 125 (9/7/1916). The city purchased Farra's water company for \$5000 so that the pipes already serving the city could be utilized (9/27/1907). The water tower was demolished in 1908 (7/28/1908). The Rock Creek system was an unqualified success and fire insurance rates dropped significantly to some of the lowest in the state (7/23/1907). It is still in use today, although the original wooden pipes were replaced long ago. With subsequent modifications, the system eventually supplied 4 million gallons of water per day which was sufficient until after WWII when water was again (although this time with treatment) drawn from the Willamette River (3/19/1976).

### **The Times location in Corvallis**

In the early 1890s, when Irvine bought the two papers, the *Leader* was located on the SW corner of SW 2<sup>nd</sup> and Monroe, whereas the *Times* was located above the Post Office at 227 SW 2<sup>nd</sup>. Irvine kept the *Times* at the latter address when he started publishing in 1893. However, running a printing facility on a second floor would have been inconvenient considering all the raw material that would need to go up and finished papers that would need to come down the stairs. He constructed a one-story wooden building for his press in a location where they were not permitted because of the fire code (presumably behind his office). After its construction and occupancy, the fire chief notified him to either remove it or alter it to comply with the fire ordinance. He argued that there was less danger from a fire with his press in a wooden building on the ground floor than there was when it was located on the second story of the brick building (8/17/1900). At some point the *Times* moved its office across the street from the post office to a one-story building at 232 S. 2<sup>nd</sup>. This may have occurred in 1901 as there was a report that the rooms above the post office were being remodeled for a real estate firm (8/30/1901). When the *Times* joined with the *Gazette* in 1909, their 'job work' was done at the old *Times* office at 232 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> until they moved to their new site at 251 Madison.

### **Living in Corvallis**

The Irvines would have lived as a married couple in Corvallis from 1883 to 1888 and then from 1892 to 1908. In the 1840s when they arrived in Corvallis, Joseph and Martha Avery each obtained a land claim of 320 acres for a total of 640 acres. Much of this was platted and sold by

the family over the years as part of the downtown area of Corvallis. It was reported that Mrs. Rebecca Kelly purchased from Mrs. Frank Irvine, a residence and 6 lots on Jefferson Street between Fifth and Sixth for \$2700 (3/14/1890). Previously in 1889, it was reported that J.L. Ripley moved into the B.F. Irvine house at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson in 1889 (9/13/1889). Joseph L. Ripley was the private secretary to William M. Hoag, the vice-president and manager of the Oregon Pacific Railroad (5/14/1886). Based on the Sanborn maps from this time period, this would indicate that the Irvines likely lived at the NE corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson and rented and then sold this property and the five adjoining lots after they moved to Sprague, Washington. It also suggests that, although early in his career, Irvine was not wealthy, his wife may have had a considerable inheritance in the form of land.

On their return to Corvallis in 1892, the Irvines lived at 322 S. 8<sup>th</sup> street. The evidence for this is that they were living in this house in 1907 when they sold it to Thomas C. Baker, a Union Civil War Veteran (5/1/1907). It was located in the middle of the block on four lots that extended to 9<sup>th</sup> ST and there was one other house to the North. The house straddled the two center lots on S. 8<sup>th</sup> Street and during a major remodel in 1930 it was moved so that it was completely



The Irvine House, 326 SW 8<sup>th</sup> ST.  
Constructed ca. 1893, moved and  
remodeled 1930; photo 2021

located on the most southerly of these lots and the address was changed to 326 S. 8<sup>th</sup> (6/14/1930;8/9/1930). The house is present on the 1895, but not the 1890 Sanborn maps indicating that it was there during much of the time the Irvines were in Corvallis after returning from Sprague. The house still exists although after the remodel in 1930 and a subsequent one, it may differ significantly from when the Irvines were occupants. After the Irvines sold their house, they moved in with Trudy's mother, Martha Avery, who lived at the original family homestead that was located between S. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> at the intersection with D street (5/29/1907). Subsequently, in 1908, the Irvines and Mrs. Avery moved to Portland when Frank became the associate editor and eventually editor of the *Oregon Journal*.

### To Portland and the Oregon Journal

One story goes that the *Journal's* chief editorial writer had an alcohol problem and Sam Jackson<sup>5</sup>, the publisher had been using Irvine's editorials for some time and kept requesting more such that he eventually became a de facto member of the *Journal's* editorial staff, although located in Corvallis. That may explain some of the editorials Irvine published in the *Times* that might not have been of much interest to his subscribers. For example, he wrote in support of the election of the Portland Mayor, Dr. Harry Lane, a Democrat of course, that might have been more oriented towards a Portland audience (5/28/1907;7/2/1907). Jackson eventually offered Irvine a position of associate editor and he moved to Portland in 1908

(Coos\_Bay\_Times\_7/24/1937). When the editor-in-chief died in 1917, Irvine was promoted to that position which he held until he retired in 1937 (dana). During his tenure he continued his support for causes of the working class and for the development of public infrastructure and he drew on knowledge of the dairy industry to promote safe milk (OJ 12/19/1908). Again, drawing on his past experience, he was particularly proud of the writing he did on a tragic accident involving a head on collision of two Oregon-Washington Railroad & Navigation Co. passenger trains near Celilo that caused the death of 7 passengers and the injury of 73 others. The railroad company blamed two senior employees for the accident, an engineer and a conductor both nearing their pension age, and fired them. With his knowledge of how railroads worked, Irvine with the help of others dug into the details of the accident and explained that it was in reality caused by the company cutting corners to save money by not having an operator near the site of the crash to coordinate the train traffic. The employees were reinstated and the company was held accountable (OJ 12/19/1921;1/13/1922; MW). As might be expected he was a strong supporter of the education of the blind and largely due to his effort, the legislature provided \$60,000 for the construction of a dormitory (named Irvine Hall) at the School for the Blind in Salem (OJ 5/31/1935).



Oregon Journal Building at Yamhill and Broadway in Portland, ca 1912-1924. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. Frank (at typewriter) and Trudy Irvine in their office at the *Oregon Journal*, ca 1920. Trudy read and discussed the news with Frank every day.

He was a prolific speaker, enjoyed the attention, and probably almost never turned down an invitation. For example, in 1920 alone he made 35 appearances as a featured speaker. These were almost always individual trips to a single destination and included Astoria twice, Pendleton, Baker City, Bend, Roseburg, Corvallis (four times), Salem, McMinnville, Spokane, and of course, many in Portland. He was the commencement speaker at the Roseburg High School and OAC graduations and talked at press clubs, business associations, and women's groups, laying a corner

stone (United Artisans), and participated in debates on the U.S. entry into the League of Nations (he was in favor). His speeches were on topics as varied as Armenian relief, Thrift (saving for old age), Radicalism and Citizenship, divided government, the economy, and jazz as a symptom of society's decadence, among others. On one occasion, in Corvallis he gave speeches to three different organizations in one day (10/23/1920). In addition to the speeches, he spent a week in San Francisco reporting on and participating in the Democratic national convention. If 1920 was representative of his 30 years at the Oregon Journal, he may have given over a thousand speeches during that time. Because he was blind, he was almost completely dependent on the assistance of his wife, Trudy, when he traveled. It may also have helped that there was an extensive passenger train service throughout much of the state at that time so he was not dependent on the rigors of car travel. However, one time he was in a car driving to Hood River to give a speech with two musicians and a friend who was apparently taking Trudy's place assisting him and two others (OJ 10/11/1921). They hit some ice and the car went out of control and crashed into a telephone pole and four were injured including Irvine who hit the windshield. They were taken to a hospital in Hood River, he had several wounds – one on his chin required twelve stitches. But never one to pass up a speaking engagement, he left the hospital in time to give his speech.

Because he was so well known and such a prominent member of the Democratic Party, in 1922 he was presented with petitions bearing several thousand signatures supporting him for Governor of Oregon. Although grateful, he declined because he thought he could promote justice, human welfare, and happiness more effectively as the editor of the *Journal* (O 1922-03-15).

During almost all of his time working at the two newspapers he was involved in higher education. He was on the Board of Regents of the Oregon Agricultural College (OAC – now OSU) from 1898 until 1915 and again from 1919 until 1929. As such, he was involved in the hiring of William J. Kerr as OAC president in 1908. Dr. Kerr spent 25 years there and oversaw a major expansion. In 1927, Irvine was awarded the third honorary doctor of law degree ever granted by OAC; President Kerr spoke of him as a 'scholar, author, orator, master of eloquence and imaginative, distinctive, honest humanitarian, practical and inspired idealist, scientific student of civic and economic problems and journalist for more than 30 years' (OJ 6/7/1927). He also received an honorary doctor of law degree from Willamette University in 1923 (OJ 6/17/1923).

In 1928 Irvine was the featured speaker at the laying of cornerstone of the OAC Memorial Union building (6/1/1928). Later in Irvine's time on the OAC Board of Regents, there was constant jurisdictional squabbling and competition for legislative funds between OAC and the University of Oregon in Eugene. In 1929, this led the state legislation eliminating all the boards of regents and their replacement with The Oregon State Board of Higher Education that governed not only the U of O and OAC, but all the teacher's colleges located throughout the state. Irvine was appointed to this board in 1929. After further rancor and competition between the supporters of OAC and U of O as to who would run this organization, Kerr was chosen with the support of Irvine and others in 1932. Irvine served on the board until 1937 when he resigned and also retired from the *Oregon Journal* (OJ 3/3/1929; O 3/16/1937).

### **Back to that bronze bust staring south.**

The sculpture, made by Portland artist Adrien Voisin, was commissioned in secret and initially unveiled at Benson Polytechnic School in Portland in 1935. Donations had been solicited from thousands of Mr. Irvine's friends from all over the world and their names filled two large volumes that were presented to Mr. Irvine. Later in 1935, when the bust was placed in the MU lounge, Governor Martin came to Corvallis and spoke of Irvine's service to mankind and said that he 'represented ... the finest ideals of the great state and has done much for its advancement'. OAC President George W. Peavy accepted the gift on behalf of the college (OJ 2/22/1935; 6/2/1935).



Mrs. B. F. Irvine, Adrien Voisin, sculptor, and B. F. Irvine at sculpture unveiling, Benson Polytechnic School, 1935.

Another sculpture of Mr. Irvine was created by Mark Shoemith, a blind artist who graduated from the U. of O. in 1934. The Irvine sculpture was his first (The\_Eug.\_Guard 4/30/1954). It was placed in Irvine Hall at the Oregon School for the blind (oreg 10/29/1936). That institution was demolished in 2010, and it is unclear where the sculpture is now located.

### **The end**

In April of 1940, Frank was in ill health and was recovering from an operation when there was a fire at their house. They were upstairs and went out on a veranda and were carried down ladders when rescued by firemen. After the smoke cleared, they returned to their house. Because of his fragile state, it was thought that this led to his death a few days later (OJ 4/23/1940). His death was reported in over a hundred newspapers throughout the USA and Canada including papers from Alaska, British Columbia, Montana, Texas, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., Nebraska, Connecticut, Ohio, Florida, the Chicago Tribune, the LA Times, the



New York Times, and etc. Most of them led with the headline 'Blind Editor Dies' or 'Fighting Editor Dies'. The Medford Mail Tribune (5/2/1940) called him 'a congenital and incorrigible idealist – but a FIGHTING idealist because of his crusades for working people...He was always dreaming dreams and seeing visions, but never wasted his time in hifalutin' Quixotic excursions, - his head was always in the clouds but his feet were always on the ground....No one...had a more practical and realistic view, of the essentials of Oregon's material development, or a clearer view, under existing circumstances of how a bigger and better state could be obtained.

Trudy passed away in 1954 at her daughter, Edna's home near Riverside, CA . She was remembered by the *Oregon Journal* as follows: 'Much of the life of Mrs. B. F. Irvine went into the editorial page of *The Journal*. Wife of the late former editor ... she was also associate, contributor and ally. ... she worked by his side reading the news of the day and adding her own penetrating and realistic comments. When [he] first lost his sight ...Trudy Irvine turned his black despair into hope and renewed purpose. ...she was steady and certain with a confidence and courage equal to every occasion'. Her 'simple newspaper memorial service' was conducted by former associates at the *Oregon Journal* building and her ashes were interred near those of Frank and their son Ward (OJ 3/7/1954).

#### **About B. F. Irvine's birth date**

A source of confusion in understanding Irvine's life is his birth date. Most of the U.S. census data available starting with 1860 (age 3), 1870, 1900, 1910, and 1940 suggest a birthdate of around 1857 and two genealogical sites gives it as 22 July, 1857, but the source e.g. birth certificate, family bible, etc, is not provided. In contrast, the 1930 census and all the articles and his obituaries indicate a birth date of about 1863. This all may go back to the documentation of his marriage which is particularly confusing. In 1883, at age 26, Irvine married 'Trudy' Avery who was 15. The marriage license listed Frank's age as 21, but correctly indicated Trudy's age. Later his age at marriage would continue to be given as 21 and hers as 17 (Munford 6/4/1990). As described above there was also a witnessed declaration from her mother giving permission for the marriage<sup>1</sup>. If Frank was born in 1863, it would mean that in 1877 when he graduated from Willamette University (WU), he would have been 14, rather than 20. His course of study may have been four years as a description of WU in 1884 expressed concern that some students left after two or three years before they had completed their 'requisite years'<sup>4</sup> meaning that he would have entered at age 10 if he was born in 1863 and graduated in 1877. He is listed by name in the above reference as an 1877 graduate<sup>4</sup>. I would have thought that some family member or Frank himself would have commented on this because even in 1877 graduation at 14 would seem to be extremely precocious. It is also unlikely because he was a pitcher on the varsity baseball team. It affects the time line as to when he went completely blind which is crucial to understanding his life. In addition, considering Irvine's profession as a writer, his prominence, and the novelty and inspiration of his life story, it is odd that he never seems to have written anything autobiographical. One wonders whether that is because the numbers would not add up. A difference of six years is significant in terms of a person's age at high school and college graduations, let alone his ability to throw a baseball. The only reason I can see for this discrepancy is that he was uncomfortable with the fact that at age 26 he married a girl of 15 and therefore they covered it up. In fact, when asked his age on one occasion, he declined to provide it (MW).

### **About the sources.**

As outlined above, there has been very little written about Irvine. All I could find are three relatively short articles published in 1927, 1940, and 1951. Probably the most widely quoted and influential article was written by Magner White and published in *The American Magazine* in 1927 (mw). It is the only article about Mr. Irvine where the author actually appears to have interviewed his subject. It is peppered with direct quotations regarding his childhood and early life and comments on his appearance and the *Journal* newsroom suggesting that Mr. White had met with and had detailed conversations with Irvine. Was it accurate? Some of the writing seems confused e.g. how he learned telegraphy, when one looks at other sources and some of the implied dates don't add up – that may have not been White's fault because when he asked his age, Irvine declined to provide it.

The author, Magner White, had a somewhat checkered career as a writer. He caused a sensation in 1924 when his report of a solar eclipse entitled *Rehearsal for Blackout*, that appeared in the *San Diego Sun* on September 10, 1923, won the Pulitzer Prize for Reporting. This was the first Pulitzer won by a west coast newspaper and one that was regarded as not particularly distinguished at that. It caused something of a scandal later when people realized that since the *Sun* was an evening paper, and the eclipse reached totality at noon, it was questioned how he could have met the deadline other than having written the piece before the eclipse occurred. Total eclipses occur fairly frequently around the world and were subjected to extensive coverage even back at the turn of the last century, so one could imagine him writing the piece, looking out his window during totality, figuring he got it right, and dumping his script in the type setter's bin in time for the evening edition.

After winning his Pulitzer, White worked in Texas and then at the Los Angeles Times. He returned to the Sun working as a columnist and editor. After a half-hearted run for mayor in 1939, White left town again, winding up at the Los Angeles Examiner in the 1950s. His final job was as a writer for the Los Angeles Air Pollution District. He died in 1980 at age 86. In an interview, White said that he thought that the usual eclipse stories were boring. Therefore, he read up on the phenomenon and figured out what it would be like. He was particularly proud that his story had been re-published in Germany in 1950 as an example of excellent journalism.

Another article about Irvine appeared in a book produced for his extended family and is called *Genealogical narrative; a history of the Claggett-Irvine clans*. The section on Mr. Irvine was written by Walter L. Hembree who was married to Clair Irvine Hembree. Mr. Hembree was the postmaster in McMinnville in 1916 (OJ 1/30/1916) and active in Democratic politics and ran unsuccessfully for Oregon Secretary of State in 1924. He probably knew Mr. Irvine and was married to one of his many cousins, but there is no evidence that they had a close relationship. His article about Irvine seems believable, although there does not appear to have been a sit-down interview and much of it was probably taken from the Mangor White article.

The third source is a chapter entitled '*Blind Editor*' in *Newspaper story: 50 years of the Oregon Journal, 1902-1952* by Marshall N. Dana and published in 1951. Dana was a contemporary and likely protégé of B.F. Irvine having started at the newspaper in 1909. In his 40-year career, he served as a staff member, reporter, editorial writer and in 1938 succeeded

Irvine as the editorial page editor. His time at the paper would have overlapped for many years that of Irvine and he was greatly influenced by him. However, by 1951, when the book was published, Irvine had been dead for 11 years and retired from the Journal for 14 and the chapter on him provides little detail on his formative years and mostly covers his time at the *Journal* and his blindness. All the quotations of BF appear to be from his writings at the *Journal* rather than answers to interview questions.

## Sources

Unless otherwise noted all reference dates refer to issues of the Corvallis Gazette-Times or one of its predecessors.

### Abbreviations used for selected newspapers

Medford Mail Tribune – MMT

Oregonian O

Oregon Journal OJ

(MND) Marshall N. Dana

(WikPed) Wikipedia

(SR) Spokesman Review

(SFR) Spokane Falls Review

(MW) Magnor White. **Daylight and Dark Are Mine Alike to Use: The Story of B. Frank Irvine, Blind Editor of the "Oregon Journal"**. The American Magazine: November 1927.

<https://archive.org/details/daylightdarkarem00magn/page/n7/mode/2up>

Magnor White. *Rehearsal for Blackout*. *San Diego Sun*. September 10, 1923.

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Rehearsal for blackout](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Rehearsal_for_blackout)

<https://www.preda.org/2015/the-age-of-consent-in-the-past-and-present/>

Age of Consent [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ages of consent in the United States#History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ages_of_consent_in_the_United_States#History)

(EKC)Edith Kerns Chambers (ed.) Genealogical narrative ; a history of the Claggett-Irvine clans. Eugene, OR [Portland, OR : printed by Binfords & Mort] , 1940.

<https://ia902809.us.archive.org/25/items/genealogicalnarr00cham/genealogicalnarr00cham.pdf>

Dana, Marshall N. **Newspaper story: fifty years of the Oregon journal, 1902-1952**

Oregon Journal, 1951

[https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b665391&view=1up&seq=9](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b665391&view=1up&seq=9)

<sup>1</sup>Text of note attached to the Irvine-Avery marriage license.

I, Martha Avery, the mother and guardian of Gertrude Avery, do hereby give my consent to the marriage of my said daughter Gertrude Avery to B.F. Irvine - my said daughter is over 15 years of

age, and I authorize the County Clerk of Benton County, Oregon to issue a marriage a marriage License for that purpose, Dated Oct 27, 1883 Marth Avery Witness F. A. Helm

<sup>2</sup>Tom Bennett; George Edmonston Jr. (October 26, 2001). "Chapter 19: 'An odd mix of triumph and embarrassment'... Kerr begins his presidency". *Carry Me Back: A History of Oregon State University (1856-1999)*. Oregon State University Alumni Association.  
<https://osughost.imodules.com/s/359/16/interior.aspx?sid=359&gid=1001&pgid=1224>

<sup>3</sup>GEORGE S. TURNBULL *HISTORY OF OREGON NEWSPAPERS* 1939 Binfords & Mort, Portland, Oregon  
[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Oregon\\_Newspapers/Benton\\_County#cite\\_note-ref22-11](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/History_of_Oregon_Newspapers/Benton_County#cite_note-ref22-11)

<sup>4</sup>W. H. Odell. 1884. A Semi-Centennial Offering to the Members and Friends of the Methodist Episcopal Church Salem, Oregon. Chapter V. The Willamette University  
[https://books.google.com/books?id=uiUuAAAAYAAJ&dq=%22William%20M.%20Ramsey%22%20oregon&lr=&as\\_brr=1&client=firefox-a&pg=PA46&ci=439,242,198,45&source=bookclip#v=onepage&q=irvine&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=uiUuAAAAYAAJ&dq=%22William%20M.%20Ramsey%22%20oregon&lr=&as_brr=1&client=firefox-a&pg=PA46&ci=439,242,198,45&source=bookclip#v=onepage&q=irvine&f=false)

<sup>5</sup>Samuel Jackson. In his first editorial at the helm of the paper, on July 23, 1902, Jackson declared that: The *Journal* in head and heart will stand for the people, be truly Democratic and free from political entanglements and machinations, believing in the principles that promise the greatest good to the greatest number – to ALL MEN, regardless of race, creed or previous condition of servitude.... It shall be a FAIR newspaper and not a dull and selfish sheet – [and] a credit to 'Where rolls the Oregon' country. In 1917, Jackson donated 88 acres on Marquam Hill in Portland to the University of Orego Medical School; the site, then known as Sam Jackson Park, is now the campus of the Oregon Health & Science University.

**Chapter 7 William Gideon Lane: soldier, teacher,  
janitor, police chief, janitor, judge**

**December 15, 2022**

**In the Union Army and coming to Oregon**

**William Gideon Lane (1848 - 1916)** was the oldest child of William W. and Mary A. Lane. His father may have been something of an itinerant farmer or farm laborer as based on the U.S. census information he lived at four different locations near Peru, Indiana in the 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880 censuses always involved in farming. WG was part of a group of 69 soldiers who enlisted on January 12, 1864 in the 12<sup>th</sup> Indiana Calvary of the Union Army suggesting he was comfortable around horses which one would expect from a farm boy. Although the minimum enlistment age was 18, he was 15 years 8 months. There were a variety of ways of getting around the minimum age including simply saying you were 18 when you weren't. Later in the war, recruiters were desperate to fill quotas, and likely paid little attention to determining proof of age. Also, a parent could endorse the enlistment of underage applicants and boys could legitimately enlist for non-combat positions. It is not clear what motivated WG to enlist but his experience profoundly influenced him and likely fueled his life-long devotion both to the Party of Lincoln (Republican) and to his comrades of the Union Army. He served for almost two years and left on Nov 10, 1865 and according to the 1870 census went back to living with his parents. In 1876 at age 28, he married Minerva Jane Smith (1848-1918).



William Gideon Lane at right.

It is not clear how he filled in his education, but may have attended school up until he enlisted. The most information on his background was provided by a brief newspaper ad that he probably wrote supporting him for the position of Benton County Assessor (May 29 1908) -he lost to WH Rickard. It states that he was born and raised on a farm in Indiana until age 19, during which he 'received a liberal education'. He both taught school and continued farming until he was about 30 after which he taught and served as a grade school principal in small Indiana towns for 13 years. He moved his family to Oregon in 1891 at about age 43 and settled outside Corvallis. It is not clear what precipitated the move to Oregon but his wife's brother, George W. Smith and his family also lived in Corvallis. Upon arrival, Lane likely taught school as he was listed as a Corvallis teacher in 1893 (Aly Dem 11/10/1893). He was always involved in Republican politics and participated in a McKinley for President rally and parade in Corvallis in 1896 (10/30/1896). In 1897 he was elected commander of the local Ellsworth Post of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) which he held for 10 years (1/6/1897; 1/11/1907). The GAR was a fraternal organization composed of veterans of the Union Army, Navy, and Marines. It was founded in 1866 and lasted until 1956 when the last member passed away. In the late 19th Century, it was a powerful political lobby strongly aligned with the Republican Party and was instrumental in securing pension for veterans and electing five postwar Republican presidents. Of six post war presidents six were GAR members. It supported voting rights for black veterans and assisted in making Memorial Day a national holiday. The woman's auxiliary of the GAR was the Woman's Relief Corps (WRC) that was founded in 1879 and Lane's wife, Jane, was a vice president of the local chapter for a time.

### **Becoming the court house janitor**

Sometime towards 1900 the Lane family moved into town and the position of court house janitor became available when the person in that position, C.A. Barnhart, 'established a business ... on Main Street, [that] made it necessary for him to be absent from the court house ... part of his time' (12/22/1899); he was fired and Lane was appointed



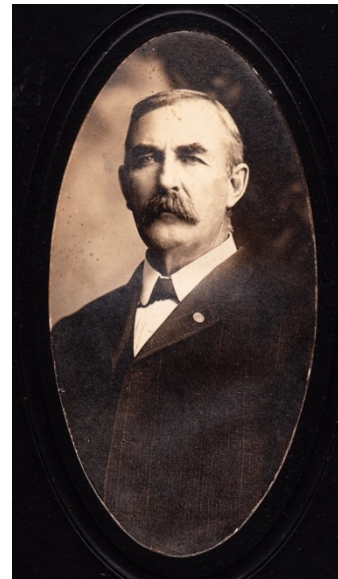
Courthouse and Jail (left), ca. 1892.

starting January 1, 1900. Although it doesn't sound impressive, the position of court house janitor was a highly desired political appointment of the county judge and was given to people who were party stalwarts – as long as they were of the same party as the judge. In 1898, E. Woodward, a Republican, had been elected. At the time, the pay was a respectable \$40/mo and the duties included the janitorial work in the court house and jail, the care of the heating plant, and management of the court house park which then as now covered a city block. Also as related in one report he had free use of jail labor for help in constructing new gravel walks in the square and piling wood in the basement (6/15/1904). The jail was separate from the courthouse and located in the SW area of the block and was about 20x40 or 800 sq ft. In 1902, Judge Woodward was defeated for re-election by Virgil E. Watters, a Democrat, and Lane should have been fired, but somehow, he held on long enough to be elected Corvallis Police Chief in 1903. In 1906, Judge

Watters did not run for re-election and Judge Woodward was elected again and the Republicans were back in control and there were 17 Republican applicants eager to replace the Democratic janitor, John D. Wells. The Republican judge was not as accommodating as the Democrat had been to Lane and as the newspaper put it 'Wells' political head has got to roll into the waste basket with a dull sickening thud next week'(7/24/1906). H.H. Glassford was the lucky new janitor (2/12/1907) and Wells was fired. However, the next year Wells was elected chief of police (5/24/1907), a position he held for 16 years. As janitor, Lane had been paid \$40/month. Financially, there was not much benefit to being elected police chief as Lane's salary as chief was \$45/month in 1903. In addition to the elected chief, the department also had night watch officer who was appointed by the city council and paid \$40/month. The chief and night watchman apparently split their duties between day and night.

### **Corvallis Chief of Police, 1903 – 1907**

Although while police chief he dealt with some bizarre and violent episodes (see below), much of his activity was more routine although occasionally dangerous, e.g. finding locations for a pest house for smallpox quarantine (9/6/1904), and installation and removal of smallpox quarantine flags (9/21/1904). Also, finding a boneyard for the disposal of dead animals (8/4/1905), enforce the dog tax (\$1 for males; \$2 for females) (1/11/1907), enforce laws prohibiting wheelmen (bicyclists) from riding on sidewalks before Nov. 1 and then below 6 miles per hour (10/4/1905), ensuring that people who stake cattle and horses in the street keep them off the sidewalks, and preventing the use of barbed wire and outward swinging gates along streets and sidewalks (6/26/1906). He also appears to have been responsible for street maintenance as he had 'several teams hauling gravel ... for bad spots in the highways.' (12/9/1903). In one instance he had to escort an inebriated woman from the train depot to her home (8/10/1906) (see below).



William Gideon Lane  
(1848-1916).

### **The Keady Incident early Sunday April 24, 1904.**

At almost 19 and powerfully built, Chester 'Peg' Keady (short for Peg-leg because of his limp) was son of George B. Keady, the head of the printing department at OAC. Well known to authorities, the previous year he had been sentenced to 50 days in jail for an unprovoked attack causing the victim a broken foot. Subsequently, he broke out of jail and was recaptured in Oregon City (1/16/1903), followed by being granted home leave after feigning illness, only to be found 'out on the town' which led to his re-arrest (2/7/1903). Keady was 'orderly enough when sober' but early Sunday morning of April 24, 1904 he was not. He and 'a small gang of hoodlums' were in town to make trouble and first went to the Opera House where an extravagant performance of the cantata of "Queen Esther" with 219 participants was playing to a packed house. They were rebuffed at the entrance by the doorkeeper so they proceeded around the building and attempted to batter down the back door, also unsuccessfully. They left and eventually found themselves among a crowd of a dozen or so in front of a saloon on the 200 block of 2<sup>nd</sup> street with Keady looking for a fight, in particular with one Ben Guier. Guier was not

interested and left and returned with D.A. Osburn, the night watchman, who 'was on the best of terms' with Keady and had been able to handle him in the past and told him to go home. Keady pulled out a pistol threatening people including Osburn, who then attempted to disarm him. As he approached, Keady shot him from a few feet away. Keady and his gang then left the area. In the meantime, Chief Lane and Sheriff Burnett had been called and Burnett and James Dunn, a former Corvallis city marshal deputized by Burnett, found Keady several blocks from the original shooting. Burnett approached to disarm him causing Keady to fire at close range somehow missing him – it was very dark. Keady then shot Dunn causing both Sheriff Burnett and Dunn to fire at and kill Keady. Osburn had been shot in the neck and the bullet passed between the carotid artery and windpipe and lodged near his shoulder blade, he survived and returned to service several weeks later, but Dunn, who had been shot in the abdomen, developed peritonitis and died a few days later (4/26/1904; 4/27/1904).

### **Aftermath of the Keady affair: Corvallis goes dry**

The Keady affair ranks as possibly the most violent incident in the history of Corvallis, and is well-documented with statements made by several witnesses, although many of them differ, the major details do not. Keady, underage at 18, belligerent and powerfully built, it was unlikely a bartender would refuse him whiskey and one didn't. Fueled by the alcohol, he and his pals went looking for trouble resulting in the deaths and damage described above. As one might expect, the incident shocked Corvallis and was widely reported throughout Oregon and the U.S. and ever sensitive to the thoughts of parents considering sending their youth to study at OAC, the incident had profound repercussions for Corvallis and Benton County. A few weeks later on June 7, 1904 there was an election with a 'local option' referendum already on the ballot. The local option allowed cities the option to go dry: not to close saloons, but to prohibit them from selling alcohol. On May 6 less than two weeks after the incident there was a rally at the court house attended by an estimated 500 people featuring as the main speaker the Rev. Dr. Tufts president of the Oregon Anti-Saloon League (5/6/1904). When the election was held the next month all four Corvallis precincts voted to go dry on January 1 of the next year by a vote of 408 to 261 (6/10/1904). Subsequently in November, Benton County voted likewise and it was generally thought at the time that the Keady incident tipped the balance towards prohibition in Corvallis and Benton County (11/25/1953).

### **The holy rollers and Edmund Creffield**

The murder of Dunn, the killing of Keady and the severe injury of Osburn was a shock to Corvallis, the quiet college town. However, since the arrival of a charismatic religious fanatic, a German immigrant named Edmund Creffield the previous year, trouble had been brewing. Creffield had started a notorious Corvallis religious cult called the "Holy Rollers" that resulted in murders, suicides and trials that were repeatedly featured in sensational front-page headlines in papers from Corvallis, Portland, Seattle and around the world and has been the subject of several books and a film, consequently, I will not go into them in detail. The "Holy Rollers" were comprised of about 20 individuals including 16 women some of whom were wives and daughters of prominent Corvallis families. During church services the congregants rolled for hours on the floor while howling and screaming for God's forgiveness, hence their name. Because of the noise of the services that extended late into the night, they were eventually banned from holding them within



the Corvallis city limits. An open public threat to Mr. Creffield was published in the Corvallis Times on 12/22/1903 and stated 'Mr. Creffield will be provided with a nice, warm coat, that will fit him as closely as the paper on a wall, and that will contain more feathers than the wings he promises himself when he reaches the place where the holy roll is kept'. Shortly thereafter on the night of January 4, 1904, a group of about 20 Corvallis vigilantes captured, and tarred and feathered Creffield and an apostle named Charles Edward Brooks and told them to leave town and if they ever came back 'they would be hanged to the nearest tree' (1/8/1904). This was clearly a blatantly illegal assault but such was the hostility towards Creffield, no action was taken by law enforcement against the perpetrators who made no effort to hide their identity. The next day, reportedly still reeking of pine tar, Creffield married Maud Hurt, the daughter of a Corvallis citizen, O.V. Hurt, at the Albany Court house (1/6/1904). By February Maud was back in Corvallis living with her parents, while Creffield was in Portland where he committed adultery with Maud's aunt, Donna Starr. Donna apparently told her husband, Burgess Starr and he swore out a criminal complaint against Creffield, and Donna signed a confession that she had had 'improper relations of the most revolting kind' with Creffield. At that time, adultery was a crime in Oregon and stayed that way until 1920. News of the adultery was widely publicized and added to the crescendo of alarm and opposition to Creffield. He evaded the police and went on the run; houses were searched and a reward of \$450 for his capture was offered. Apparently, he contacted Sarah Hurt, Mr. Hurt's wife and Maud's mother and also a cult member and Sarah may have made arrangement to secretly hide him under their house near Corvallis and provide him with food. However, Sarah was committed to the Oregon Insane Asylum about a month before he was found. After up to 8 weeks in hiding, O.V. Hurt's 14-year-old son discovered him under the house and a very skeletal, unkempt, and bedraggled Creffield was arrested by Chief Lane in late July. Apparently, there were rumors of vigilante action again possibly at the train station and Chief Lane arranged for the train to make a special stop near the jail where Creffield was loaded aboard and sent to Portland to stand trial. He was convicted of adultery and sentenced to two years in the penitentiary. After his was release, he headed to the coast and re-activated his cult with many of his original followers. Vigilantes again went after him and he went on the run and was eventually shot dead in Seattle by Charles Mitchell the brother of a girl cult member, Esther, who the rumor was 'Creffield had selected ... to be the mother of a new savior who was to be sent into the world by God' (7/10/1906). Subsequently, after a sensational trial that acquitted Mitchell of Creffield's murder, Esther shot her brother dead in Union Station in Seattle with a gun provided by Maud, Creffield's wife. Maud subsequently committed suicide in the Seattle jail and Esther was committed to an insane asylum and a few years later after her release she committed suicide also. Although much of the Creffield saga occurred in and involved residents of Corvallis, Police Chief Lane must have been relieved that the final mayhem occurred elsewhere out of his realm. Certainly, the Seattle officials were outspoken in their objection to this group of Oregonians coming to their city and imposing such a burden on their law enforcement, judicial, and mental health facilities. For more on Creffield see Chapter 5 and references therein.

#### **1907 - 1916 Truant officer, courthouse janitor, judge.**

After four years as police chief in what may have been the most tumultuous time in Corvallis history, Lane did not run in 1907; J.D. Wells who replaced him had served as janitor during Lane's time as police chief (5/24/1907). However, Lane was appointed truant officer for

Benton County under a newly passed law requiring compulsory school attendance. All children 9 to 16 were required to attend school, although those 14-16 were exempt if they were employed. Children under 10 living more than 1.5 mi and those over 10 living more than 3 mi from school were also exempt (10/25/1907). It was estimated that there were 33 truants in Benton County when Lane began his term (10/25/1907). However, Lane could not find any truants when he followed up on these cases; many had moved to other districts and were in school, or in a few cases children were receiving private instruction.

In 1908 he ran for county assessor, but lost to W.H. Rickard. However, his old job as courthouse janitor became available and the Republican Judge Woodward was still in control, so Lane returned to his old position. The following year, the presiding Justice of the Peace died and attorneys thought Lane's time was not fully occupied and recommended him for Justice (8/18/1909). He served for two terms as the JP (1909-1916) until he passed away during which he continued on as the courthouse janitor. It was reported that in order to preserve 'the dignity of his court...officials suggest that he get himself a long black robe' so that he would not have to 'change his overalls if called upon to hold court at a time when he was prepared to mow the lawn or sweep the stairway' (8/18/1909). He also served as acting coroner (9/19/1913). In addition to performing marriages, some of the cases he judged included imposing a \$75 fine for shooting a Chinese pheasant out of season (9/29/1911), deer hunting out of season, fishing without a license, forgery, extortion, assault with a dangerous weapon – the accused threw a beer bottle at a train and hit the engineer (2/21/1911), a butter maker falsifying weight, and bootlegging. There was not a lot of action reported during this time as janitor although there was a jail break and Lane showed up in the nick of time to grab the feet of a convict who had tunneled under the north wall of the jail. The newspaper reported that while the jail guard went to the post office, the convict 'discovered a soft place in the wall (it's all soft)' and carved out a hole large enough to crawl through in about two minutes, but Lane grabbed him before he could escape (11/12/1912).

Lane died of an apparent heart attack on September 20, 1916 while on a deer hunting trip near Alsea (9/21/1916).

### **The Lane Houses.**

About the time Lane became police chief he purchased four lots including a house and two barns at the north end of the block between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and Monroe from Mr. and Mrs. J. N. McFadden (5/9/1903). Julian N. McFadden (1874-1953) was a Corvallis attorney. In 1904, the house was the site of



The Lane Family: Minerva Jane Smith, Clara, Floyd, Ralph, Wm Gideon Lane, Wm Smith Lane (youngest), ca 1894.



The W.G. Lane Houses. Clockwise from top left. i) 421 SW 8th before remodel in 1982, ii) current, 2021 and iii) the second Lane house at 435 NW 4<sup>th</sup>, constructed ca 1909.

the marriage of the Lane's daughter Clara to Arthur Roy Woodcock, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Milton S. Woodcock. The senior Mr. Woodcock was owner of the Corvallis Gazette, and president First National Bank of Corvallis among other business interests. In 1905 Mr. Lane contracted with R. N. Adams to build a 5-room cottage just west of his house for his son Floyd Lane (11/7/1905).



Floyd died unexpectedly of peritonitis at age 32 on November 29, 1908 (12/1/1908). In 1909, Lane sold the property to the Presbyterian Church for \$5000 (4/6/1909). The church in turn sold the Lane house to Egidio 'Gene' Tortora for \$350 contingent upon it being 'moved at once' so that the church could be built on the site (4/6/1909). The house was moved to 421 SW 8<sup>th</sup> ST and ground was broken for the church later in the year (8/13/1909). The Lane house was built using square nails and plank frame construction which was a primitive but rapid form of building in which 2 x 8 and wider planks extending from the foundation timbers to the junction with the roof rafters form the exterior walls and are nailed to the perimeter floor beam, a horizontal cleat is attached to support the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor joists, and then the roof was added at the top which holds everything together. There was no room for plumbing or wiring in the exterior walls. This house still exists at 421 SW 8<sup>th</sup> St. The Lanes purchased two lots on N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street and

contracted with Porter, Baldwin & Sebrell to build a house on the lot at 435 N.W 4th (5/3/1909;5/8/1909); they moved into the new house in early July, 1909 (6/26/1909). This house still exists and is on the local historic registry.

### **SHE GOT BOOZE.**

**At Independence, and Could Not Find Way Home.**

It happened Wednesday evening, after the freight train arrived from Independence. Someone phoned Chief Lane that a drunken person was at the depot, and that worthy officer hurried to the scene to find, seated flat upon the platform and supported by a telephone pole—not a masculine tippler, but a female, so drunk that she could not find her way to her stopping place in this city. She is a transient, and when asked where she belonged replied with an oath that it was none of the chief's business. Finally she mentioned her residence, and was assisted to her feet and started homeward, but within a block had lost her bearings and Chief Lane and Nightwatchman Osburn were forced to support her on either side and promenade several blocks to her destination.

The scene is said to have been ludicrous in the extreme, but one in which the officers at the time saw no joke. A valise,

saturated with booze and with one end knocked out, was carried by the wobbly dame, and odds and ends of feminine belongings were scattered here and there along the street and were gathered up by the exasperated escorts. A small hand satchel containing papers of various kinds was also clutched in the hands of the tipsy traveler, and as she frequently "stubbed" her toe and lunged forward the papers were wafted on the breeze and Chief Lane exhausted his supply of patience several times in giving chase. When Officer Osburn remarked, disgustedly, that jail was the proper place for such persons, the female showed fight and David wisely subsided into silence for the remainder of the stroll.

The booze, according to the woman's statement, was obtained in Independence, and she claimed she had a gallon. She gave Chief Lane a quart, but one bottle had been broken. It is said that the female created all sorts of disturbance on the train coming from Independence Wednesday evening.

August 10, 1906

## References

Unless otherwise noted all reference dates refer to issues of the Corvallis Gazette-Times or one of its predecessors.

<https://ehistory.osu.edu/exhibitions/Regimental/indiana/union/12thIndCav/12thcav1>  
history of the Indiana 12<sup>th</sup> cavalry

<https://www.fold3.com/company/111753/indiana-12th-cavalry-company-i-union-civil-war-stories>

Creffied references:

For a brief overview Wikipedia is a good start.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund\\_Creffield](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Creffield)

A more detailed overview is available from a two-part series from 2011 by Finn J. D. John

<http://www.offbeatoregon.com/o1106a-bride-of-christ-holy-rollers-in-covallis-ending.html>

<https://offbeatoregon.com/o1105e-bride-of-christ-holy-rollers-in-covallis-beginning.html>

There are several books on the topic.

1. "Holy Rollers: Murder and Madness in Oregon's Love Cult," co-written by Robert Blodgett and Theresa McCracken, Caxton Press, 2002.

[https://mchumor.com/edmundcreffield.com/holyrollers\\_newspapers\\_1903\\_06\\_10.html](https://mchumor.com/edmundcreffield.com/holyrollers_newspapers_1903_06_10.html)

**2. Murdering holiness : the trials of Franz Creffield and George Mitchell (2003). By Phillips, Jim. Vancouver : UBC Press.**

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4. Marlene McDonald, a volunteer at the Benton County Historical Museum, wrote and self-published "Roll Ye Sinners Roll, The Story of the Creffield Cult, Corvallis, Oregon 1903-1906."

5. The Land that Kept its Promise: A History of South Lincoln County. 1976, by Marjory H. Hays. Lincoln County Historical Society.

6. Review of film 'How the Fires Fell'

[https://www.gazettetimes.com/entertainment/how-the-fire-fell-a-film-by-edward-p-davee/article\\_fd3cb282-22a9-11e1-88f0-001871e3ce6c.html](https://www.gazettetimes.com/entertainment/how-the-fire-fell-a-film-by-edward-p-davee/article_fd3cb282-22a9-11e1-88f0-001871e3ce6c.html)



## Chapter 8

### Malinda Robinson Goldson: Photographer, Physician, Author.

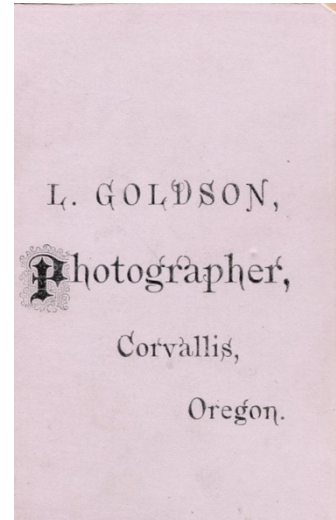
October 16, 2022

#### William and Malinda Goldson: Photography in Corvallis (1874 – 1879)

William Henry Goldson (1835-1909) was from Mississippi and served in Confederate army. In the 1860 census his occupation was listed as 'Deguarean artist' indicating that he was involved in the production of daguerreotypes, an early type of photograph. In 1865 he married Malinda Robinson (1847 –1932); they had one child, W.H. Goldson, Jr (1869-1929). Malinda Goldson had a distinguished career first as a photographer from 1874 to 1879 and then as a medical doctor from 1883 and thereafter specializing in diseases of women and children. Following her life is complicated because she altered her first name over time.

To trace her career, one needs to follow that of her husband who did not appear to ever focus on a specific profession for long, although he may have trained her in photography and been involved in her photographic studio. To make everything fit one has to assume that early in her career, she may have been known as 'Linda' rather than Malinda Goldson. Mrs. Goldson started her photographic studio in Corvallis in 1874 and it was advertised as belonging to Mrs. L. Goldson, L. Goldson, or Mrs. Goldson (6/13/1874). She provided a variety of services and could make multiple prints from photo negatives (12/5/1874). Her prints had a lavender colored reverse side showing her L. Goldson logo. In 1875 her gallery had an exhibit at the State Fair and a newspaper reporter wrote: 'L. Goldson, of Corvallis, exhibited some fine ... photographs, the work being executed by himself and wife' (The New Northwest 10/22/1875) suggesting that

Mr. Goldson may have participated in the photographic work, although only Mrs. Goldson's name appeared in the ads and on the photographs. In 1875, Mr. Goldson was chosen as a director of the



**PHOTOGRAPHIC!**

**Mrs. L. GOLDSON'S**  
**ART GALLERY,**  
**Main Street. - - Corvallis.**

**I** IS NOW IN FULL BLOOM, Where she is executing all the latest style

**Photog apts, Mezzotints, Peal, Porcelain, Chromotypes, Etc., Etc.**

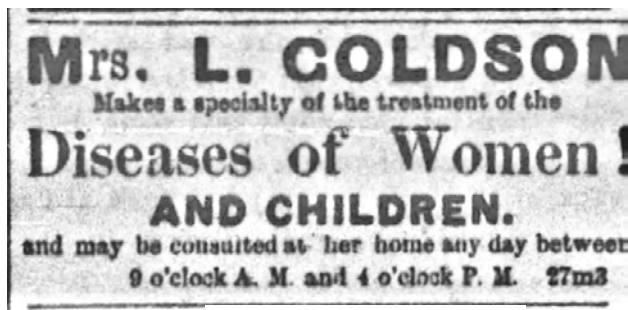
Water Color and India Ink Pictures, put up in first class style. Small, card size pictures reproduced to Full Life Size, as perfect as if taken

**FROM LIFE.**

**BABY PICTURES, a Specialty! Taken in FIVE SECONDS!**

Money refunded, if work is not satisfactory. Call and examine specimens.  
Corvallis, June 20, 1874. 11:29tf

Alden Fruit Preserving company (3/27/1875). Then in late 1877 it was announced that Mr. Goldson had taken out a license as an auctioneer and 'He can be found at the Photograph Gallery'.... (1/25/1878). In 1879, the gallery was advertised for sale by L. Goldson (8/22/1879) and then it was reported that W. H. Goldson sold his photograph gallery and entered into partnership with Dr. H. Green in the drug business (9/26/1879). His knowledge of drugs may have been related to his training as a Deguarean artist which involved the use of a number of chemicals, many of which were toxic. This arrangement with Dr. Green may have lasted until about 3/11/1881. He also joined with Richard Graham at a drug store called the City Dispensary (5/21/1880), but by late 1881 the City Dispensary was represented only by Graham (12/2/1881).



7/6/1883 Corvallis GT



*Mrs. Malinda Goldson M.D.*

San Francisco, Cal.

### **The Medical Career of Malinda Goldson in Corvallis and Oakland**

After selling the gallery, Mrs. Goldson attended Willamette University Medical School and her graduation was announced in 1884 (3/28/1884). In this announcement she was referred to as Mrs. Malinda Goldson. During her time with the gallery and medical school, their child, W. H. Goldson, Jr., would have ranged in age from 6 to 15, so part of Mr. Goldson's time may have been occupied with looking after him while Mrs. Goldson pursued her careers. In 1883 it was reported that Mrs. Goldson was opening a medical practice in Corvallis specializing in diseases of women and children and that she 'has spent much time and taken great care to qualify herself' (7/6/1883). In 1887 it was reported that Mr. Goldson was a candidate for city Marshall (4/29/1887). He apparently lost the election to the incumbent, Mr. Pygall, and later in the year, Dr. Goldson moved her practice to Oakland, CA and Mr. Goldson purchased a farm near Fresno (11/25/1887). Dr. Goldson had a sister, Lottie Layton, who lived in Oakland (8/3/1903 OT) and this may have influenced her move there. In 1889-1890, Dr. Goldson took a post-graduate course in London, England, on the Diseases of Women and Children and also studied therapeutical electricity with the French specialist, Dr. George Apostoli<sup>1,2</sup>. In 1892 she opened the Lakeside Sanatorium in Oakland, California, and ran it until 1897. In this instance a sanatorium might have been similar to long term care facility housing people with tuberculosis, other chronic diseases and some mental illnesses. In 1909, her husband W.H. Goldson passed away. Starting in 1912 she was involved in



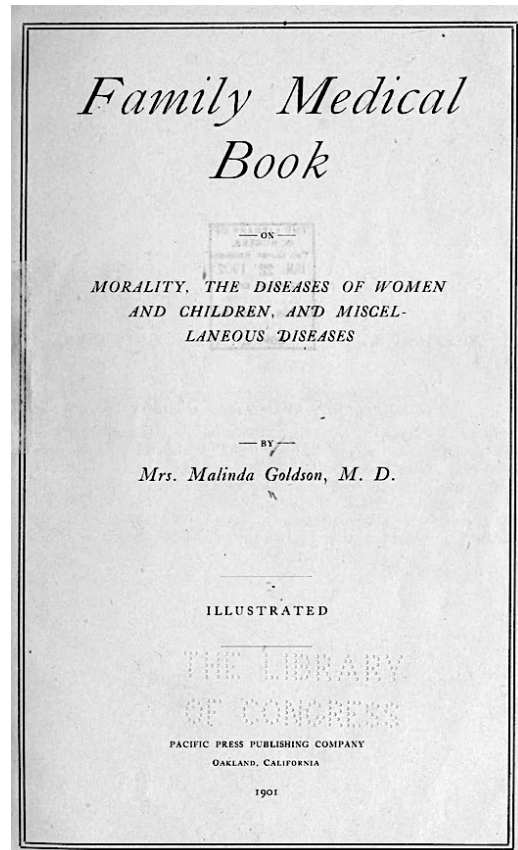
major planning and fund raising for an Oakland Children's Hospital. She also advertised the 'Special Home Sanitarium during this time.

**DR. MRS. L. GOLDSON.**  
**DISEASES OF WOMAN AND CHILDREN A**  
specialty; 1105½ Broadway, Oakland, Cal. 1884

THE Special Home Sanitarium, 1021 Telegraph ave. M. Goldson, M. D. 1916

### Publication of a medical text book.

In 1901 she authored a book entitled *Family medical book on Morality, the Diseases of Women and Children*<sup>1</sup>. It comprised 914 pages with 68 chapters. The morality component in the title was apparently her belief that having children was part of God's plan for women and they are put on earth to 'fulfill His law and carry out His purpose ...and honor Him throughout all eternity'. She lamented that the 'Anglo-Saxon race [was] fast becoming extinct.' She referred to contraception as a deplorable practice that was due to women not wanting their 'patrician pleasure and esthetic taste disturbed by the cares of maternity.' However, that was in the book's Introduction and the rest of the book was likely authoritative for its time although she did recommend electrical treatment for some problems of women such as stenosis of the cervix, fibroid disease, and super-involution of the uterus. There are many photographs and diagrams in the book and most lack a credit suggesting that she produced them herself. In recent years, the book has been regarded as a culturally and historically important work and consequently has been reproduced by two different publishers; Wentworth Press (2016) and Forgotten Books (2019) and is available on line<sup>1</sup>.



### Dr. Goldson's later career, a Corvallis interlude

Dr. Goldson continued to practice in Oakland and in 1913 it was reported that she was to leave on a tour of the East and a trip around the world and be gone for about a year (2/20/1913)<sup>3</sup>. Then in 1915 she visited relatives in Corvallis (8/6/1915) and shortly thereafter, she returned to Corvallis and opened a practice at 220 3rd (2/10/1916). Subsequently she had her office at 342 South third (10/30/1917), 314 South A (5/28/1921), 9th and Adams (10/14/1921); and side entrance of library building (7th and Monroe) (2/3/1922). During this time, she may have maintained her practice in Oakland; in the 1920 census she is listed as living in Oakland CA as a practicing physician with nine boarders eight of whom had an average age of 77 years suggesting that this may have been some sort of care facility.

### **The final 8 years, a re-marriage and return to Mississippi**

In 1924 Dr. Goldson married Samuel Lumsden Cooke (1842-1926) of Walthall, Mississippi. Their marriage was announced as follows: 'Sweethearts of the days before the Civil War had love's dream come true after more than half a century when Col. Sam Cooke and Mrs. Malinda Robinson Gohison (sic) were married in Walthall yesterday....The Civil War brought about conditions that delayed this marriage...but now's revived a young happiness in the evening of their lives.' Sam Cooke had been born and raised in Slate Springs, MS, completed college in Lexington, KY and enlisted in the Confederate Army in 1861. Apparently after a battle, he was given up for dead, but had been taken prisoner leading Malinda to marry Mr. Goldson in 1865. After the war Mr. Cooke worked as a newspaper editor in Kentucky, and subsequently went back to Mississippi and taught school and later became a lawyer. Dr. Goldson was his third wife. Mr. Cooke passed away in 1926 followed by Dr. Goldson in 1932. Her final years were spent living with a nephew William V. Young and his family in Charleston, MS<sup>4,5,6</sup>.

**Malinda Goldson, M. D.**  
**CORVALLIS, ORE.**  
**Physician and Surgeon**  
Office, 220 3d St., (Crees Residence)  
Phone Ind. 2539  
Residence, 319 North 3d Street  
2/10/1916 Phone Ind. 471

### **Summary**

William H. Goldson, who was listed as a 'Deguarean artist' in the 1860 census, married Malinda Robinson in 1865. He may have trained her in the photographic processes but she was always listed as the proprietor of the gallery in Corvallis that was featured in weekly/biweekly ads in the local newspaper from 1874-1879. Whereas, it might be considered unusual for a woman to run a photographic studio during that time period, it may have not been so in Corvallis as there is evidence that three of the earliest (1866-1878) Corvallis photographers were women including Celia Stryker (who also may have been trained by her husband) and Hannah Atwood along with Mrs. Goldson. Mrs. Goldson must have been dissatisfied with the work and subsequently enrolled in medical school. After a few years practicing in Corvallis, she moved to Oakland, CA and in 1890 did additional year of medical training with a post graduate course in diseases of women and children in London, England. The publishing in 1901 of a medical text as the single author suggests that she had become an expert in the area of health of women and children. The text has numerous detailed medical diagrams most of which she gives no credit suggesting that, due to her skill with taking and coloring photographs, she may have produced them herself. She returned to Corvallis and opened a practice in 1916 for a few years but continued to also have connections with Oakland as the 1920 census lists her as living there while advertisements for her office in Corvallis continued through 1922. She had relatives in the Corvallis area as her brother-in-law James McCain Goldson (1832-1922) moved from Mississippi about the same time as his brother and after initially living in Corvallis moved to an unincorporated village about 10 mi west of Junction City where he had a sawmill. In 1891 he became the first postmaster of the village which was named for him. Dr. Goldson re-married in 1924 at age 77 and spent her last years in Mississippi.

The Sun Sentinel. Charleston,  
MS. Mar 24, 1932

**MALINDA GOLDSON COOKE,  
M. D.**

At the Moody hospital, Charleston, "Aunt Malinda" as she was known by her friends in Charleston, went quietly to sleep with Jesus, March 16. She was 86 years old. "All that can be carried from this world in your cold, cold hands is, what you have given away." Aunt Malinda carried away much.

Among her friends in the West and abroad "Aunt Malinda" was known as Dr. Goldson. She and her husband were reared in Mississippi. They moved to Corvallis, Oregon, where she entered medical department of Willamette University of Portland, Ore., graduating in surgery and medicine in 1884. She took a post graduate course in the School of Medicine in London, England in 1889, returned to America in 1900 and with the assistance of her druggist husband, promoted a hospital and sanitarium in Oakland, Calif.

Several years after her husband's death in 1908, she gave up her active work and lived with her only son in Portland, Ore., who had married her adopted daughter. At the beginning of the World War she accompanied him and his family to England where he was employed by an English syndicate. They returned home on the Mauritania, sister ship of the Lusitania, the sinking of which caused the United States to enter the war. No lights were permitted on the returning ship and Uncle Sam's Navy furnished a convoy.

In 1924 she was married to Hon. Sam Cooke of Walthall, Miss., long a writer for the Commercial Appeal and her pre-Civil War sweetheart. He was taken prisoner and had been given up for dead. He answered his last call in 1927.

Since that time "Aunt Malinda" has made her home with her nephew and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. W. V. Young at Charleston. Besides her daughter, Mrs. Julia Goldson, three granddaughters, Malinda, Ruth and Doris, one grandson, Robert, she is survived by many nephews and nieces scattered over the United States.

## Sources

All dates in brackets refer to an issue of the Corvallis Gazette-Times newspaper or one of its predecessors. Some of the information also came from the Oakland Tribune (OT).

<sup>1</sup> Malinda Goldson M.D. Family medical book on morality, the disease of women and children. 1901. Pacific Press. 68 chapters, 914 pages.  
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcmassbookdig.familymedicalboo00gold/?sp=19&st=image&r=-0.001,1.242,0.862,0.418,0>

<sup>2</sup> The Method of Dr. Apostoli. Sarah Ellen Palmer M.D. 1891. Read at the Maine Medical Assn.  
<https://collections.nlm.nih.gov/ext/dw/101204839/PDF/101204839.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Oakland Tribune. 2/20/1913

<sup>4</sup> Sam Cooke passes away at his home. The Commercial Appeal. Memphis, TN. Sep 12, 1926.

<sup>5</sup> Malinda Goldson Cooke M.D. The Sun Sentinel. Charleston, MS. Mar 24, 1932.

<sup>6</sup>Sweethearts of the days before the Civil War Wed. The Commercial Appeal. Memphis, TN. Nov 23, 1924.

Mrs. W. H. Odell. 1884. A Semi-Centennial Offering to the Members and Friends of the Methodist Episcopal Church Salem, Oregon. Chapter V. The Willamette University  
[https://books.google.com/books?id=uiUuAAAAYAAJ&dq=%22William%20M.%20Ramsey%22%20oregon&lr=&as\\_brr=1&client=firefox-a&pg=PA46&ci=439,242,198,45&source=bookclip#v=onepage&q=irvine&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=uiUuAAAAYAAJ&dq=%22William%20M.%20Ramsey%22%20oregon&lr=&as_brr=1&client=firefox-a&pg=PA46&ci=439,242,198,45&source=bookclip#v=onepage&q=irvine&f=false)

**PICTURES!**  
**GOLDSON'S GALLERY**  
**MAIN STREET. CORVALLIS.**

**H**AVING JUST REFITTED MY GALLERY, I am now prepared to do all work in my line, on the shortest notice, and in the finest style—from the smallest gem to the largest photograph made.  
**COPYING OLD PICTURES, made a specialty.**  
I also will sell the Hale & Hazleton piano, and American Organ, for less money, and on better terms than any one else on the Pacific Coast, according to the quality of the instrument.  
I still have a few more Wheeler & Wilson Sewing Machines, which I will sell for \$10 less than any one else on this coast.  
Those wishing anything in my line, will do well to give me a call. **L. GOLDSON.**  
Corvallis, Feb. 27, 1875. 6m.

**Sweethearts of Days  
Before Civil War Wed**

EUPORA, Miss., Nov. 22.—Sweethearts of the days before the Civil War had love's dream come true after more than half a century when Col. Sam Cooke and Mrs. Malinda Robinson Gohlsion were married in Walthall yesterday. Judge T. L. Land pronounced the marriage ceremony.  
The Civil War brought about conditions that delayed this marriage, and both have been married previously, but now 's revived a young happiness in the evening of their lives.  
Col. Cooke has been correspondent for The Commercial Appeal for many years past at Walthall and has written up accounts of hundreds of weddings for the paper, but he "scooped" The Commercial Appeal by not reporting this one, leaving it to his neighbor, the Eupora correspondent.

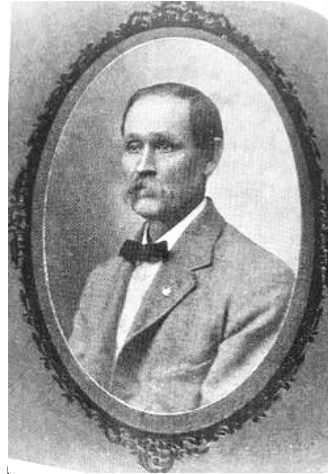
The Commercial Appeal  
Memphis, TN. Nov 23, 1924

# WANTED!

**5,000** BABIES—**1,000** GENTLEMEN, and about **500** Ladies—  
(more or less), at

**L. GOLDSON'S Gallery,**  
to get their pictures taken. 13:50if

1/5/1877



Samuel Lumsden Cooke,  
(1842-1926) Dr. Goldson's  
second husband.

## HELP WANTED—FEMALES.

**AGENTS WANTED IN EVERY CITY OR TOWN IN**  
the United States to sell Dr Malinda Goldson's **Female Urinals**; every family should have one, and no sick woman can afford to be without one; sent to any address on receipt of price, \$2; a big discount to agents: send 2 etc. for terms to agents. **H. GOLDSON, 409 West 19th st., New York.**

New York Herald (8/5/1886). It is not clear how this ad fits into Dr. Goldson's biography. This is the only ad I could find with Dr. Goldson associated with a female urinal and it only appeared once. There were only a few other ads for these devices that I could find during this time period, one from North Yorkshire, England in 1880 and the other in the Hazleton, Sentinel (Hazleton, PA) in 1881, and a new invention announcement in the Perthshire Herald (England) (4/28/1887).



## Chapter 9 A history of the Corvallis wagon and carriage factory 1891 – 1904

December 27, 2020

The 1870 and 1880s were called the gilded age, a period of economic optimism and rapid settlement and growth in the Northern and Western U.S. As a newly established town, Corvallis was caught up in this growth and there is a history of failed speculation particularly on railroads both in Corvallis and the surrounding area. Much of the speculation climaxed in the ‘Panic of 1893’ which led to a severe economic depression in the US and affected every sector of the economy.

At four stories and over 60,000 square feet, the Corvallis Wagon and Carriage Factory (Fig. 1) briefly loomed over southwest Corvallis from late 1891 until 1904 when most of it was dismantled and moved to Albany. Although there are numerous articles on the rapid rise and collapse of this enterprise in the archives of the Corvallis Gazette Times, none of them that I could find specifically provide an analysis of its failure. A major impetus for building the factory appeared to be the theory that reduced shipping cost of vehicles that were oriented to a western market would give a Corvallis factory an advantage over midwestern companies. Also, many of the Corvallis city leaders felt that the presence of a major factory would provide many economic benefits for their young town. The Model T Ford was produced in 1908 and its subsequent mass production certainly altered the wagon and carriage industry, but the Corvallis factory had failed over a decade previously. A main cause could have simply been that with a lack of capital, the company was never able to establish itself and certainly could not weather the severe economic times of the 1890s. Problems with management probably could also be factored in.

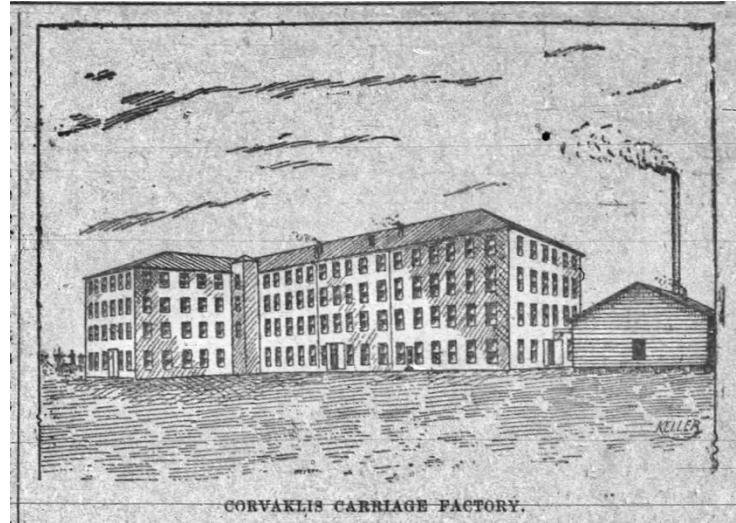


Fig. 1. The Corvallis wagon and carriage factory at SW 13<sup>th</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> and A ST. Top, from 10/22/1894, bottom, ca 1900.

### Planning for the Carriage Factory.

A number of Corvallis citizens were interested in establishing a carriage factory. The city council voted to exempt the company from taxes for 10 years. John Sticker was selected as superintendent of the factory. He had experience at the Brantford carriage factory in Brantford, Ontario, Canada. It was estimated that the cost of the products would be about 10% below the current prices for equivalent vehicles because of reduced cost of transportation. Local wood

would be used where possible. It was estimated that the factory would produce 25 vehicles/day and initially employ 50 men predicted to grow to 150 in a short time. The vehicles would range from the road-carts or buggies to the heaviest truck (6/12/1891)\*.

At a stockholders meeting, the Board of Directors was selected including: John Sticker, ZH Davis, JB Lee, FM Johnson, MA Beach, WA Wells, MS Woodcock, P. Avery, and Wm. Crees. From these, officers were elected including: JB Lee, Pres., P. Avery, VP; FM Johnson, Sec; and the First National Bank, Treasurer. The board met and selected a 5-acre site just west of the Oregon Pacific depot and adjacent to the tracks which had at least in part been provided by Avery and Wells (7/10/1891). Construction began in August 1891 and the factory began operating in the spring of 1892 and by summer 40-50 mechanics were employed with plans to hire an equal number by the end of the year (9/09/1892). They advertised 'They are made of the finest second-growth timber...ALL JOBS ARE MADE AND PUT TOGETHER IN DRY SUMMER WEATHER when the timber is thoroughly dry, which is not done with Eastern jobs...' (8/5/1892).

**Financial problems I.** Within a year, the factory was in financial difficulties and it was reported that W.T. Wiles of the First National Bank was appointed receiver; he resigned shortly thereafter (6/23/1893). Later that year Superintendent Sticker made arrangement with creditors whereby business was resumed and factory would again be 'on its feet' (10/13/1893).

**Sold at auction.** However, in was not 'on its feet' for long and by early 1894 the factory valued at more than \$70,000 was sold at auction to C.T. Brace of the Paddock, Hawley Iron co. of St. Louis for \$19,601. That was \$1 more than the mortgage held by the First National Bank and represented a major loss to investors (3/21/1894). In September 1894, the factory was sold to a group including William Uhlmann who had been the foreman of the Moline Wagon Works in Moline, IL for many years. He was to be the superintendent. Another investor, Albert E. Lyford, was designated as the business manager (10/19/1894). J.M. Cheney, the long-time foreman of the machinery and electrical department of the Moline Wagon Works was another investor. He was in charge of the machinery department. Articles of incorporation were subsequently filed for the factory that was called the Coast Carriage & Wagon Company with stock valued at \$65,000 (10/19/1894).

**HOME INDUSTRY!**

Fine Buggies and Carriages.

I will amply pay anyone for their time to go to

**THE CORVALLIS CARRIAGE & WAGON CO.'S FACTORY**

And see their large and extensive factory at Corvallis, Oregon, where you can buy BUGGIES, CARRIAGES AND SPRING WAGONS which, with proper care, will last a life-time. They are made of the finest second-growth timber and the best of other material by that factory, where each piece of material is taken from the rough and shaped in the factory by machinery designed for the purpose. Each vehicle is finely painted in the most elegant style.

ALL JOBS ARE MADE AND PUT TOGETHER IN DRY SUMMER WEATHER when the timber is thoroughly dry, which is not done with Eastern jobs, as most Eastern rigs shipped to this country are built in winter and early spring when the weather is damp. The beauty of all these jobs is that they are all FULLY WARRANTED and sold at such REASONABLE PRICES that there is no excuse for anyone to buy anything but a home-made rig.

8/5/1892

**MOLINE WAGON COMPANY,**  
MOLINE, ILLINOIS.

Capacity Over 100 Wagons per Day.

THE BEST GRADES ONLY.

Manufacture the Light-Running Moline Farm and Spring Wagons.

Illustrated Catalogues Free on Application.

**Moline Wagon**

TRADE MARK

Fig. 2. The competition.



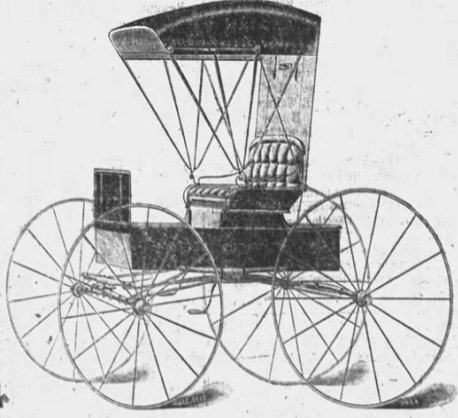
The focus of the new company was to be on farm wagons similar to the 'celebrated' Moline wagon (Fig. 2) except it would have steel rather than wood gears. By early 1895 the factory had 20 employees and was producing most of the moving parts of the vehicles out of double sheets of pressed steel in order to eliminate the use of bolts as much as possible as they had a history of coming loose after extended use.

**Assignee's Sale!**

The entire stock of the Coast, Carriage & Wagon Company's Buggies, Carriages, Carts, Hacks and Wagons, will be sold for cash at greatly reduced prices.

Strictly first-class work in all jobs. The "Coast" all Steel Gear wagons, the best in the world; recommended by all who have used them. If your dealers do not carry the "Coast" vehicles, write direct to the Factory and get prices.

**M. M. DAVIS,**  
Assignee Coast, Carriage & Wagon Co.



Anyone who is intending to a buggy or heavy wagon should be sure to call on or write us soon. We will be compelled to raise our prices before long as our stock is nearly exhausted and will have to begin buying new material soon. We have 60 first class buggies and several heavy wagons on hand which we are selling at reduced prices. First come, the first served.

**Cramer Organ and Carriage Factory.**

**Assignee's Closing Out Sale.**

The entire stock of buggies, carriages and wagons of the Coast Carriage & Wagon Co. to be sold at once regardless of cost.

**Look at These Prices.**

A First Class Top Buggy .....	\$ 65 00
A First Class Road Wagon (Portland body) .....	40 00
A First Class Open Buggy .....	45 00
A First Class Combination Spring Wagon .....	65 00
A First Class 4 Spring, 3-Seat Mountain Wagon .....	100 00


These are no cheap goods, but the best line that has ever been made at this Factory.  
A great reduction in prices on

**"Coast" All Steel Gear Wagon.**

These wagons from \$60 to \$80. Former price \$80 to \$105. Buy now. You will never have such an opportunity again.

**M. M. Davis,**  
Assignee Coast Carriage & Wagon Co.  
Corvallis, Or.

Fig. 3. Top, GT 12/4/1895, bottom 8/26/1896.



Twenty five hacks to be sold in the next month  
The most durable hack on the coast for the money.  
Made out of the best material from the east.  
We do not turn out any cheap work; all first class with guarantee.  
We are preparing to furnish covers for all hacks.  
Patronize your home factory.  
Remember our organs, we are ready to furnish them at reasonable prices, for further particulars call on or address,

**Cramers Organ & Carriage Factory**  
Corvallis, Oregon.

Fig. 4. GT top, 4/23/1902; bottom, 11/5/1902

A substantial amount of new machinery was installed. Oregon wood was used for all the woodwork including brake bars, tongues, reaches, beds, seats, and etc. Alder was supplied by Horton Mills, near Monroe. Hickory from the East was used for wheels and some minor components (4/1/1895). Despite this, there was a report of the factory receiving

a shipment of wheels from Des Moines, Iowa for which the shipping charge was \$242 (1/24/1895) and axles, bolsters, and gearing from Davenport, Iowa (3/7/1895).

**Superintendent commits suicide.** After only a few months in Corvallis (1/31/1895), and a few weeks after his wife and four daughters arrived to live in Corvallis (5/2/1895), William Uhlmann, the superintendent, strangled himself on the 4th floor of the factory (5/23/1895).

**Financial problems II; Sold at auction II.** By June, the company was bankrupt again (6/13/1895) and the company was assigned to M.M. Davis to the benefit of creditors (8/07/1895). Mr. Davis sold off as much of the finished stock as he could (12/04/1895) (Fig. 3), but it was not enough to satisfy the creditors as is evidenced by a lawsuit by First National bank for \$1000 plus interest. It was also noted that the *'Company was not incorporated and that all the stockholders are liable as partners'* (4/07/1897). Therefore, the factory and its contents were auctioned off again. Farmers from all over the county reportedly attended the sale with their eyes on the finished wagons at bargain prices. The unfinished rigs, buildings, machinery and etc. were sold to two of the current stock holders of the failed corporation; Mr. J. F. Robinson, cashier of the Rock Island Nation Bank of Rock Island and Thomas Jenkins, an employee of the Moline Wagon Co. for \$4000. Robinson-Jenkins had previously bought up 5/6 of the outstanding claims and it was suggested the purchase was made for their own protection as creditors and stockholders (4/9/1897, 4/10/1897). The Judge (Fullerton) thought the price

**A  
GREAT  
"CUT"  
ON . . .  
ORGANS**



**THE Cramers Organ Factory** offers a discount of 10 percent on all Organs sold for cash between now and January 1st, 1903.  
A fine lot of piano case and cottage organs on hand.  
A guarantee for 10 years with each organ.  
Organs also sold on easy terms.  
Send direct to your manufactory and save the



**Middle Man's Profit.**

Our organs are cheaper and better made to stand this climate than any eastern organ.  
Have had 14 years' experience in the business, and can guarantee you enough better organ, than you can buy elsewhere, for the money, and pay freight and expenses of all middle men.  
Now you have a manufactory within your reach, why not patronize home industry?  
The manufacturing business is the life of your state.  
We have made these organs on the coast for three years, and they meet the approval of the best musicians and are all giving the best of satisfaction.  
Our business is increasing rapidly. Call on or address us for an organ for a Christmas present.

**Cramers Organ Factory**  
Corvallis, Oregon.

**Our \$89 Piano**

case organs lead them all. They cannot be excelled for durability, richness of tone and neatness of case. Organs from \$45.00 up, made on special orders. We are meeting with the best of success and selling organs as fast as they can be made. We have an extra lot started, to reach out farther. By sending in an order early, we will be able to fill it in good shape. No Eastern organ can compete with our instruments in make-up guaranteed for 10 years.

Our terms are cash, or  $\frac{1}{2}$  down  $\frac{1}{4}$  in 6 mo's,  $\frac{1}{4}$  in 12 mo's, or \$20.00 down and \$5.00 per month. One payment must be made before organ leaves factory. We guarantee the organ, and if not as represented we will refund the money.

For further information address:

**CRAMER ORGAN FACTORY,**  
Corvallis, Oregon.

Fig. 5. GT left 12/6/1901; right 12/27/1902

inadequate, but there were apparently no objections so he confirmed the sale (4/17/1897).

**Sold and converted to organ factory.** The plant appears to have sat idle for about four years. The one mention in the GT from mid-1897 to mid-1901 was in 1899 - *'the huge building makes a ghastly specter in the night time with moonlight streaming through the windows into the many vacant and empty rooms. This is one dead enterprise Corvallis has upon her hands that it seems impossible to revive'* (5/26/1899). It was not until 1901 that R.M. Cramer of Dallas, OR bought the plant for \$4500 from Mr. Jenkins. Mr. Cramer along with his brother were the owners of an organ factory in Dallas, Oregon. They moved their factory to Corvallis and in addition to organs, they decided to continue making carriages, although they may have just been completing unfinished vehicles (6/25/1901) (Figs. 4, 5). In the summer of 1902, Cramer set out for Southern Oregon with a convoy of 12 hacks and buggies and 20 wagons apparently full of organs. It was reported *'the moving caravan makes an interesting sight along the country roads'*. They would stop along the way and if a person didn't *'want a big organ, he can buy a little one. He can have either a wagon, a light or heavy hack, or a spick and span buggy'* (7/16/1902).

**Move to Albany.** The Albany Commerce Committee offered RM Cramer \$2500 to cover obtaining land and moving expenses to transfer the factory to Albany. It was reported that Cramer favored Albany over Corvallis because of superior shipping facilities and that hemlock lumber that he used for organ manufacturing was located nearby up the Santiam River (11/21/1903). Cramer received a loan of \$5000 from Albany citizens to move in addition to the \$2500 bonus from the city (12/24/1903).



Fig. 6. The remains of the Carriage factory and its water tower; the Bodine Warehouse, ca 1907. The railroad depot is shown at the right when it was located near SW 9<sup>th</sup> and Washington.

**Dismantling most of the carriage factory.** All wood working machinery and the west portion of the building (60' x 125' and 4 stories high) *'including chimneys, windows, casing, flooring, beams, stairs, iron roofing, etc.'* were conveyed by push carts to flat cars of the C&E railroad for transport. The upper two stories of the East building were also removed and the building was converted to a 2-story structure (4/16/1904) (Fig. 6, 7,8). The salvaged material was used to construct 3 two-story buildings in Albany: one of 60' x 100', and two each of 50' x 60' (1/23/1904) (Fig. 9). The new factory was likely built on leased railroad land east of the Albany roundhouse (DWH 1/7/1904)\*\*. Although late in 1905 it was reported that Cramer's Albany factory was *'selling a*

good many hacks'(10/6/1905), within a year its name had changed to the Albany Furniture Factory. It was sold to the Union Furniture Co. in 1909 (AWH 4/9/1909) (Fig. 9). Later it was reported that although the carriage factory proved a failure, it had prospects of being 'one of the largest furniture factories on the coast' (5/9/1911). According to the Albany city directory, by 1936 the Central Door and Lumber Co. was located at the site. By 1938 it was the Central Door and Plywood Corp. and eventually became the Linn Plywood mill which was destroyed by a fire in 1959 (8/7/1959).

**The remains of the carriage factory in Corvallis were sold for a warehouse and stockyard.** Bodine & Peck purchased the remaining building and area to open a warehouse and stock yard (Fig. 6) (6/25/1904) and then Peck sold his interest to Bodine (10/12/1904). They provided scales for weighing stock and the property was divided into several corrals with a building for hay storage (see 1912 Sanborn map (Fig. 8)). It was stated that hay, oats, chittim (wheat), and barley would be bought by the firm (6/25/1904). A few years later, Mr. Bodine sold the warehouse to Geo Brown (1/22/1909) who was a livestock dealer. Mr. Brown moved to Idaho in 1917 (12/12/1942) and likely sold it then. For about a year (1921-1922), it was the location of Denson's Feed and Warehouse (Fig. 7), but in 1922 it became the home of Corvallis Feed and Seed until 1981 when it was destroyed in a fire (10/13/1981). Based on the 1912 and 1927 Sanborn maps, sometime between those dates, the main building was expanded to the north, the water tower was removed and the structure was repurposed as a grain and feed warehouse (Fig. 8). After the fire, the property was purchased by OSU and a new warehouse for surplus government property was constructed in 1995. Therefore at least part of the carriage factory had a productive life in Corvallis for many years (Fig. 7,8).

**Summary.** Although the Corvallis carriage factory was able to hire supervisory personnel with extensive experience in the industry, their experience was not enough to overcome the problems they encountered. There were a couple reports of the arrival of shipments of wheels and other wagon parts from the Midwest suggesting that they were unable to manufacture these as they had planned. The suicide of the superintendent who was likely heavily invested both financially and personally in the second incarnation of the factory must have been a severe blow. However, I could find no mention linking this to the sale of the company. There is also the issue of the

**DENSON FEED & WAREHOUSE**  
13th and R. R. Streets

Dealer in Flour, Hay, Grain and Seeds of all kinds; Lime, Cement, Wall Plaster, Land Plaster, Hydrate Lime, Armcoc Metal Lath, Corner Bead, Fire Brick, Press or Facing Brick Red Houston Seed Wheat, Hanchen Spring Barley, Shadeland Seed Oats. A complete line of Kerr Poultry and Dairy Feeds.

**J. J. DENSON FEED & SEED STORE**  
Opposite Postoffice—Madison Street

Carry a complete line of Feeds of all kinds. Also a complete stock of Garden Seeds in bulk and package; Gromore Fertilizer, the very thing for your lawn or garden. Dr. Hess poultry and stock tonics, at the lowest possible prices.

**For 17 Years**  
**Corvallis Feed and Seed Co.**  
Has discharged faithfully the trust placed in it by the Farmers of the Willamette Valley in the buying, selling and storage of hay, grain, feeds, seeds and other agriculture products.

**During The Past 10 Years**  
We have maintained an Oregon state bonded warehouse—and issued negotiable receipts on all hay, grain and seed stored.

**WHEN DESIRED—** Farmers may dispose of their Hay, Grain or Seed to us for cash.

**Recent Additions To Our Plant And Equipment . . . . .**  
Have Given Us One of the Most Fully Equipped Plants in the Willamette Valley  
—Capable of Handling All Types of Cleaning, Grading, Fumigating and Storage.

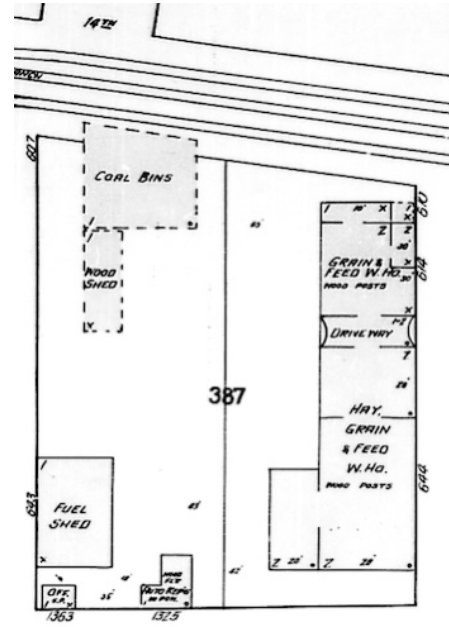
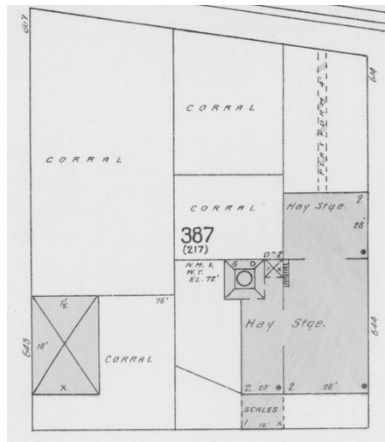
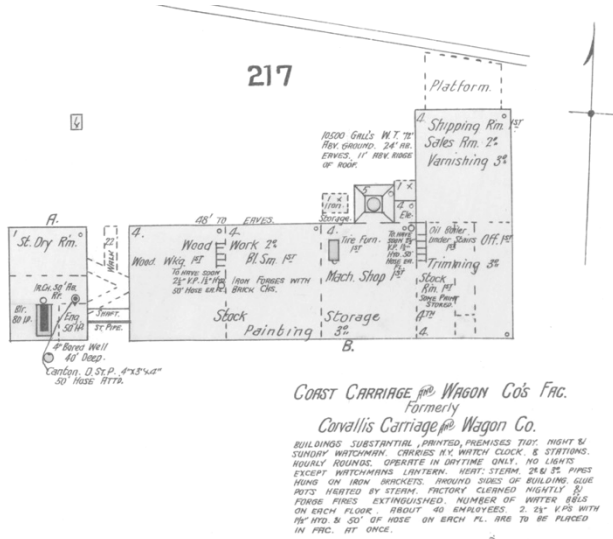
**Building Material . . . . .** Wholesale and Retail . . . . .  
as cement, wall plaster and lime are Sales of flour and cereals.  
always carried in stock—for your A complete line of feed and seeds  
convenience. are always on hand.

**We Invite Your Patronage . . . . . Give Us A Call**

DISTRIBUTORS OF  
**FISHER'S BLEND - CROWN'S BEST PATENT - SPERRY'S DRIFTED SNOW**  
FINE FLOURS

**Corvallis Feed & Seed Co.**  
W. A. BATES . . . . . J. E. REARDEN  
13th & Railroad Corvallis, Ore. Phone 303

Fig. 7. Left, GT 4/12/1922; right 7/24/1937.



A.

Fig. 8. From the Wagon and Carriage Factory to Corvallis Feed and Seed. Clockwise from top left Sanborn maps, 1895, 1912 (after most of the factor was moved to Albany), 1927 map, and photo as Corvallis feed and Seed warehouse ca 1953.

possible expiration of the tax abatement. If it was for 10 years, it might have been scheduled to expire in about 1902. That would have imposed a further burden on an owner if the factory was idle. This would be especially true for the owners who were living in Illinois and wanted to extricate themselves from what may have been a clear liability that the GT had referred to as a 'dead enterprise ... that it seems impossible to revive' (5/26/1899). A peculiar observation is that, in contrast to the proliferation of ads in the GT archives for both carriages and organs from R.M. Cramer during his ownership, I could find only about 5 (Fig. 2) for the previous incarnations of the factory. Whether this reflects the lack of an advertising budget, poor management, or that they were not necessary is unclear. It is also unclear why R.M. Cramer went to the trouble of

moving his factory to Albany only to have his business fail. However, there is evidence that at least part of the factory was used up into the 1950s for the manufacture of furniture, doors, and plywood. The financial incentives offered by cities including tax abatement and land to encourage industries to become established in their locale may have seemed convincing, but in this case, it certainly did not prove sufficient for the carriage factory to thrive in either Corvallis or Albany. Nothing much has changed in that area.

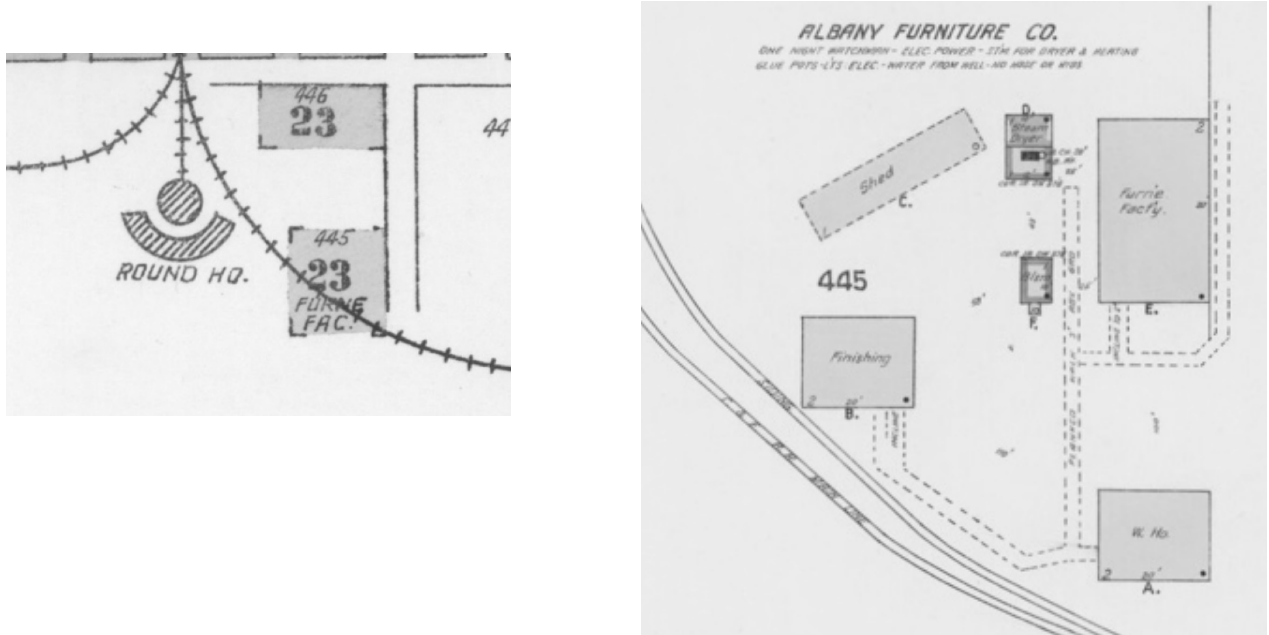


Fig. 9. The carriage factory in Albany. Clockwise from top left, 1908 Sanborn map showing location of factory near the Albany round house, map of furniture factory in Albany, and photograph of Union furniture factory at 12th and Hill St., Albany. It was likely derived from the carriage factory (4/9/1909)\*\*. It was destroyed by a fire in the late 1950s.

\*All dates reference the article in the GT archives containing the information.

\*\* Some of the later references in Albany are from the Albany Weekly Herald.

Note: There is some ambiguity regarding the location of the Albany factory. It was in an open area east of the roundhouse bordering Hill St, but the precise cross street varied from 9<sup>th</sup> St to 12<sup>th</sup>St, probably reflecting the lack of streets in that area.





## Chapter 10

### History of 446 SW 5<sup>th</sup> ST Corvallis, OR A bungalow from a catalog?

November 30, 2020

#### Major people associated with 446 SW 5<sup>th</sup>

**Mr. and Mrs. Morse Burnap.** Contracted to build the house in about 1907

**Roy Price** built the house in 1908

**Charles McHenry.** Partner of Roy Price, built similar houses.

**Mr. and Mrs. James Preston McDonald** owned the house for 25 years from 1908 until about 1933.

**Paul P. Bates** Bought the house, probably in the early 1950s, and had it moved to 446 SW 6<sup>th</sup> ST in 1953. His family owned the house until 1989.

**V. W. Voorhees** (1876 - 1970). Seattle architect/designer, may have sold plans for the house.

**George Rohrmann and Louise Meadows** bought this house in 2001.

The information provided below was obtained from the Corvallis Gazette Times Archives which is indicated by the date of the issue containing the information. Other information came from Ancestry.com, the U.S. Censuses (1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940), and several Corvallis Directories. All these sources were available online through the Benton County Library.



Fig. 1. Left, plan No. 46A by V.W. Voorhees 1908. Right, 446 SW 5<sup>th</sup> ST, Constructed by Roy Price, 1908.

#### The design of 446 SW 5<sup>th</sup>.

446 SW 5<sup>th</sup> ST (Fig. 1) is one of about 10 homes in Corvallis built from 1908 -1912 that have a distinctive hipped-roof bungalow style including 1.5 stories with the 2<sup>nd</sup> story extending out over the front porch and supported by 3 columns. In some, half of the porch area was enclosed. Usually there are at least 4 dormers and they often have bay windows on one or both sides, and

built in seats at the bottom of the stairs (for examples see Appendix 1). They also have unusual scalloped ornamental brackets supporting the eaves often on all the four sides of the house. They are similar to plans produced by V. W. Voorhees (1876 - 1970) of Seattle in about 1907 (Fig. 2). He was one of the Pacific Northwest's most prolific architects designing and overseeing the construction of hundreds of homes, apartment buildings, hotels, and commercial buildings. He was not trained as an architect, but was educated in the law, but worked in general construction during his college years. He got his start in the Seattle area through an architectural practice, Fisher & Voorhees in 1904.



Fig. 2 Voorhees Bungalow Ad, ca 1908

By 1907 he published the first edition of *Western Home Builder*, his residential home plan book. By 1911 he had published 6 editions of this catalog. One of his ads, probably in *Sunset Magazine* in 1908, was entitled 'Build a Bungalow' (Fig. 2) and offered a '100-page book of bungalow, cottage and house plans' for 25 cents and indicated as an example that he would provide 'Complete plans, specification, details, bill of material of this Bungalow' for \$10. Although we do not know if Mr. Price or other Corvallis builders used the Voorhees plans, it is clear that plans for designing houses similar to these were available via Mr. Voorhees. 446 SW 5<sup>th</sup> appears to be a variation of a mirror image of plan No. 40C combined with some details from plan 76A (Fig. 1). The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Voorhees house plan book is available at <https://dahp.wa.gov/sites/default/files/WesternHomeBuilder5thEdition.pdf>

### The history of owners/residents

446 SW 5<sup>th</sup> ST was originally constructed at 318 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> ST in 1908. Mr. and Mrs. Morse Burnap contracted with Roy Price to build the house for \$1600 (6/23/1908). This was likely a spec house as they sold it in 1908 to James P. McDonald. In the 1910 and 1920 censuses, McDonald and his wife Augusta (1861 - 1933), their son, and 2-3 lodgers lived there. Mr. McDonald passed away in 1928 and his wife in 1933. She is listed as living there in the 1930 census as a widow.

**James Preston McDonald (1848 – 1928)** was born in Nashville, Tennessee. At age 4 or 5 his family moved to Holly Springs, Mississippi. He served in the Confederate Army, first as a messenger boy because of his age, and later in the cavalry under J.E.B. Stuart. His family were slave owners and his father and two of his older sons also fought for the South and all three were killed at Gettysburg in 1863. After the war, Mr. McDonald owned a cotton plantation in Alabama. It was there that he became one of the original members of the Ku Klux Klan. He later taught school in Colorado and in 1872 moved to Eugene and was one of the builders of the Oregon and California Railroad and also worked as a train operator. Later he was a conductor on that line and subsequently for the Corvallis & Eastern Railroad, and the Oregon-Washington Railroad & Navigation Co. from Walla Walla to Dayton. He made the first trip as the conductor from Astoria to Portland on the Astoria and Columbia River Railroad. Mr. McDonald moved to Corvallis in 1908 and lived at 318 SW 3rd until he passed away in 1928 (11/24/1928). His wife Augusta

continued living there and appeared to be active in the WCTU as meetings were held at the house (6/5/1929). She passed away in 1933 (7/31/1933).

**FIRE SALE**  
 ENTIRE STOCK FORMERLY OWNED  
 BY THE FASHION STORE,  
 Taken Over by Insurance Co's.

---

All Prices Reduced Again to  
 Close Out This Stock  
 Immediately!

**HIGHEST QUALITY MERCHANDISE ONLY**

LADIES COATS, Ruben, Delsol, Edrich, etc.  
 Reg. to 99.50.....NOW 19.50 to 29.50

LADIES SUITS, Ruben, Edrich, Stylette, etc.  
 79.50.....NOW 19.95 to 25.00

LADIES SKIRTS, over 200 to select from  
 Reg. 5.95 to 18.95.....NOW 2.95 to 6.95

LADIES SLACKS, Rayon, Gabardine, Corduroy, etc.  
 Reg. 7.95 to 18.95.....NOW 2.95 to 6.95

LADIES SLIPS, Finest Quality  
 Outsize & Regular Size.....NOW 1.95 to 4.95

LADIES SWEATERS, Tish-U-Knit  
 Reg. price 5.95.....NOW 2.45

LADIES NITE GOWNS, Lace Trim, First Quality  
 Outsizes.....NOW 3.75

---

**LADIES' NYLON HOSE**  
 DuPont Nylon -- First Quality

54 Co., 15 Denier by Fowens  
 Reg. 1.95 & 2.45. Now all to close at **98¢** pr

MEN'S HEAVY FIRST GRADE T SHIRTS	Reg. 1.25	NOW \$ .55
MEN'S TIES, pure silk	Reg. 3.00	NOW 1.49
MEN'S TIES, large assortment	Reg. 1.50	NOW .75
MEN'S SUITS, Gramercy Park	Reg. 69.50	NOW 24.95
MEN'S SPORT SLACKS, Gabardine, Etc.	Reg. 18.50	NOW 7.95
MEN'S LOAFER COATS	Reg. 27.50	NOW 13.95
MEN'S CORONET GAB. SPORTSHIRTS	Reg. 7.95	NOW 3.45
MEN'S FURITAN, all-wool SHIRTS	Reg. 8.95	NOW 3.75
MEN'S ARGYLE 100% WOOL HOSE	Reg. 2.95	NOW 1.49
MEN'S LOUNGE ROBES, Beautiful	Reg. 25.00	NOW 9.95

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Attend This Sale! Remember Only Highest  
 Quality Merchandise at a Fraction of Original  
 Cost.

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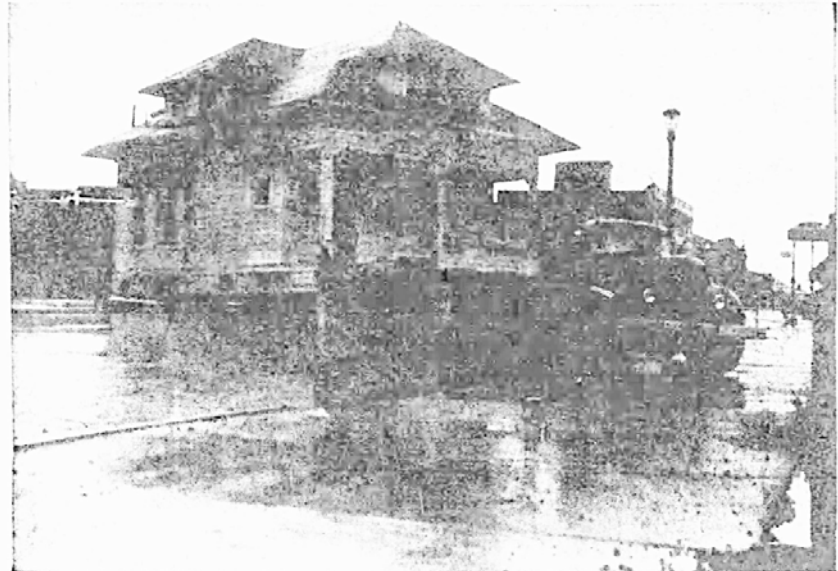
318 South 3rd -- Next Door  
 North of Day's Super Market

---

**OTIS D. RANDALL**  
 Selling Agent

Fig. 3. Ad for Fire Sale at 318

*House Moved to Make Way for Building*



This two-story, seven-room house was taken on a short journey over Corvallis streets today to continue service as a residence. In two hours the building was pulled from its long-time site at 318 South Third to its new location at Fifth and Washington streets. The Bates and Long real estate agency had the building moved to make way for a new building planned for the south Third street location. (Gazette-Times photo.)

Fig. 4. Moving 318 S. 3rd to 446 SW 5<sup>th</sup> in 1953.

The house appears to have been rented starting about 1933. Channing (Chessie) Ball (1892 – 1976), a painter and decorator rented the house from 1937 to 1947, part of the time with his sister Flora Ash. He was the son of John W. Ball and brother of William Ball, of Ball Studios (2/14/1931). George H. Wilcox, a carpenter, was a lodger in the house in 1940 and passed away there in 1942. Later in the 1940s it may have been a beauty salon (9/12/1949). In 1950, after a fire nearby at The Fashion clothing store at 113 South 3<sup>rd</sup>, there was a fire sale of the merchandise held at 318 S. 3<sup>rd</sup> (Fig. 3) suggesting that the house had evolved to become a commercial property since it was in the core downtown area. It was also the site of a 'radio auction' for a Kiwanis charity in 1952 (10/27/1952). Paul Bates, a real estate broker and developer purchased the property in 1953 from Ollie Alcorn. He wanted to develop the site for a specifically designed commercial property, so he had the building moved to 446 SW 5<sup>th</sup> ST (3/12/1953) (Fig. 4). At about the same time he also purchased another property belonging to Ollie Alcorn. It was located at SW 8<sup>th</sup> and Adams and contained a vacant lot. He had his personal residence (404 S. Jefferson) moved to that location, 802 SW 8<sup>th</sup> ST, so the S. Jefferson property could be developed for a gas station. In 1984, a cottage located behind 446 SW 5<sup>th</sup> and on the same lot (515 SW Washington) was demolished (9/14/84). It is not on the 1927 Sanborn map so must have been built or moved there later. The Bates family owned the house as a rental for at least 36 years. Marjorie J. Bates, who was Paul Bates daughter-in-law (she was married to his son Clarence), sold the property to Richard Gretz and Robert Street in 1989. We bought the property in 2001.

**Roy Price, the builder.** The Builder of 446 SW 5th, Larkin Roy Price (1868-1929), (Fig. 5) was born in Dallas, OR. In 1907, he formed a partnership with another contractor, Charles McHenry, for the promotion of residential building and the sale of real estate and had an office above the First National Bank (1/1/1907; 5/7/1907) (Fig. 6). Mr. McHenry was building in Corvallis by 1904. Some of the houses that they built were similar 1.5 story bungalows, e.g. 608 SW 7<sup>th</sup>(McHenry), 446 SW 5<sup>th</sup> ST (318 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> ) (Price), and 660 NW Van Buren (Price). Price likely also built 324 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> (it was next to 318) for S.V. Gay (2/25/1908; 2/26/1908). It was likely eventually demolished. Price also built single story bungalows, e.g. 614 SW 3<sup>rd</sup>. Another house he likely built was for J. Fletcher at 112 NW 8<sup>th</sup> ST (8/21/1908). He also may have built a house 306 7<sup>th</sup> ST for E.D. Jackson (2/25/1908) (demolished in 2015). Other houses similar to 446 SW 5th are 730 SW 10<sup>th</sup>, 2121 NW Monroe, and 202 NW 21<sup>st</sup>, although it is unclear whether he built them. Similar houses that no longer exist were present at 520 SW 14<sup>th</sup>, 445 SW 13<sup>th</sup> and 530 NW 5<sup>th</sup>. The later was damaged by a fire in December, 1972 (12/11/1972) and demolished in 1973. Price was a very aggressive builder; of the 63 homes listed as being constructed in early 1908 (GT 6/23/1908), Mr. Price was listed as the contractor on 15 and McHenry for 6 of them. In contrast, the next year the GT reported 53 houses under construction with McHenry list as contractor on 7, but Mr. Price on none (5/8/1909). This likely reflects problems Mr. Price had as he apparently skipped town in early 1909 taking funds that were meant for houses yet to be completed (1/26/1909) (Fig. 7). It was reported ‘No trace has yet been found of Roy Price, the absent and much involved contractor, and the liens and attachments against property owners, who thought themselves square with him, now amount to over \$6,000.’ (1/29/1909). In 1909 there was notice of a sheriff’s auction of some of his belongings including: 1 bicycle, 1 floor plane, 1 set, 10 volumes, “Cyclopedia of Architecture Carpentry Building (4/27/1909). These were apparently sold (5/7/1909). It doesn’t sound like that would cover the \$6000 he owed. In 1911, several lawsuits against him were settled and dismissed (3/31/1911) suggesting that he was able to settle the claims. Mr. Price moved to Clark County where he passed away in 1929 at the age of 61 (7/30/1929). Mr. McHenry probably left Corvallis around 1915 and



Fig. 5. Larkin Roy Price, 1912.

—Charles McHenry and Roy Price have formed a partnership in the real estate business. A feature of the business will be the promotion of residence building. They have secured rooms for the present over First National Bank, Corvallis.

Fig. 6. C. McHenry and Roy Price partnership, 1/1/1907.

No trace has yet been found of Roy Price, the absent and much involved contractor, and the liens and attachments against property owners, who thought themselves square with him, now amount to over \$6,000.

Fig. 7. Roy Price, 1/29/1909.

was living in Lodi CA in 1920. In contrast to Mr. Price, there is no evidence that he encountered any legal problems.



2121 NW Monroe. 1915



660 NW Van Buren



202 NW 21st



229 NW 7th



730 SW 10th



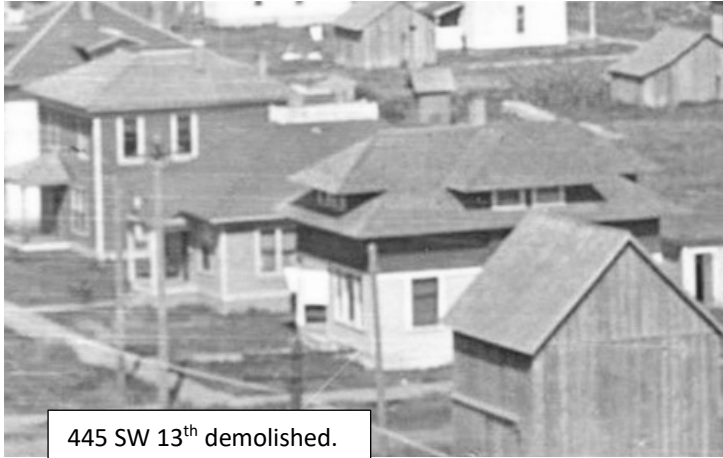
530 SW 5th



520 SW 14th. Demolished

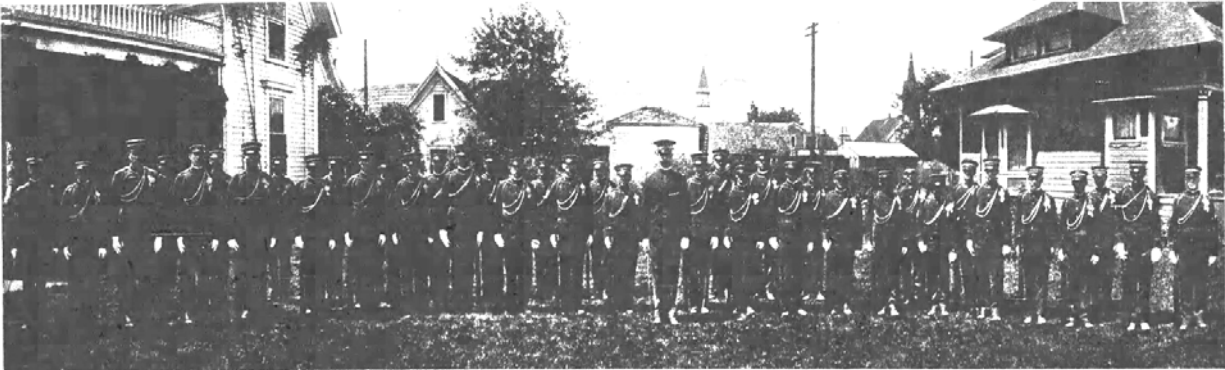


550 NW 5th. Demolished after fire, 1972



445 SW 13<sup>th</sup> demolished.

Corvallis' Own Company K, First to Entrain for Mexico and Later for France, Sworn in by Col. McAlexander



Back row, left to right—Anderson, Lloyd, Wilbur Dawson, Benton Titzer, George Foltz, Albert Rose, Pete Farmer, Frank Stokes, Geart Ellenberg, Mark Hathaway, C. M. Bryant, L. B. Redford, Ralph Proutt, W. M. Balch, George Graves. Front row—Sidney Frank, Claude Swann, Frank French, George Cate, Art Kelling, Cassa Colbert, Charles Hubler, John Bellis, Howard Rose, Arlo Armstrong, Bill Hubler, Claude Schrack, Charles A. Marzolo, John P. Hauer, W. M. Hubler, George Tripp, Stanley Tripp, F. Shannon, Lawrence Ann, Bob Clark, Ernest Wyatt, Wells, Ralph Gilbert.

Possibly 324 (on right) and 342 (left) SW 3<sup>rd</sup>. Spires in background possibly from Catholic churches at 328 and 348 SW 4<sup>th</sup>. Col. U. McAlexander swears in Company K, circa 1917.

Appendix 1 Vorhees type bungalows built in Corvallis

## Chapter 11

Lon M. Hyde, Teacher, Principal, and Master Builder

Corvallis, Oregon 1925-1930

November 4, 2020



Fig. 1. 962 SW Adams (left) and 415 SW 10<sup>th</sup> (right). 1926.

### Lon M. Hyde, Corvallis builder ca 1925-1930.

Lon M. Hyde (1892-1962) was born and raised in Missouri. He attended Northern Arizona Normal School, the precursor of Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff and received certification to teach first grade in 1914 (Az Repub. 6/11/1914) and in 1917 was superintendent of schools in Benson, AZ. He enlisted in the army and trained as a medic during WWI (Den. Post.12/27/1917) and was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the 21st Infantry (1917 – 1919).

He was a teacher in Gearhart, OR in 1920, and taught in Alaska for several years as reported in the Albany paper where he had purchased a 'Durant sport model car' from Truax Motors (7/25/1925). He came to Corvallis in 1925 from Seaside, OR to be the principal of Roosevelt Elementary School (9/17/1925). Roosevelt School (aka South School) was opened in 1912 at 1316 SW Western Blvd, closed and subsequently destroyed by arson in 1975. He was offered a renewal contract to teach elementary school in March 1926, but it is not clear if he continued teaching. Apparently, Mr. Hyde's preferred construction to teaching because, as is evident from many ads in the GT; Mr. Hyde purchased lots,

built houses, and at one point offered 6 for sale (1/22/1929). He was likely a skilled carpenter with a particular affinity for what he called 'English type houses that featured a prominent steeply



Fig. 2. 315 SW 12<sup>th</sup>, house is bottom right. Demolished 1967. Photo ca. 1939.



423 NW 16<sup>th</sup>.



427 NW 34<sup>th</sup>.

Fig. 3. Houses that were likely built by Lon M. Hyde ca 1927-1929.



940 SW 10<sup>th</sup>.



435 NW 34<sup>th</sup>.

gabled front entry component at right angles to the main structure. Of the 7 houses that evidence suggests he built, 6 are this style. Two of these are located at SW 10th and SW Adams and they are stucco structures (Fig. 1). He also built a 1.5-story house that looks similar to those houses at 315 SW 12<sup>th</sup> (10/1/1927) (Fig. 2); it was demolished in 1967 to make way for the construction of an OSU parking lot. He built a similar house at 423 NW 16<sup>th</sup> ST (8/14/1928) (Fig. 3), but it has beveled wood siding. He also likely built a 1-story shingle-sided bungalow at 940 SW 10<sup>th</sup> (7/20/1925) (Fig. 3). The assessor indicates that this house was built in 1923, but Hyde took out a building permit for that lot in 1925. He may have lost this house in a lawsuit (see below).

In 1928, Mr. Hyde was reported to have purchased 3 lots in the Western Addition (AKA Woodcock Addition) and had broken ground for the first on NW 34<sup>th</sup> ST (Fig. 4). His purchase of at least one lot from M.E. Woodcock (427 NW 34<sup>th</sup>) was noted in the GT in 1929 (Fig. 4). The Woodcock brothers, Milton Edwin (1883 – 1965) and C. Harold (1883-1962) were natives of Corvallis and served as vice president and president respectively of the First National Bank of



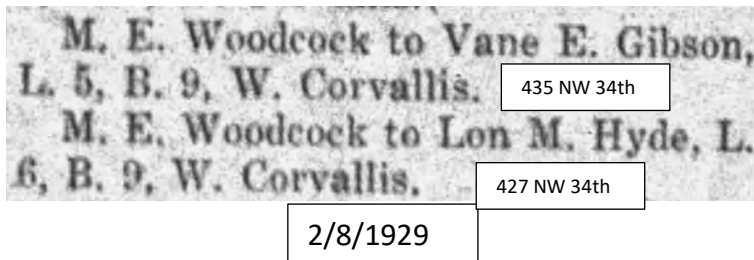


Fig. 4. Left, report from GT that Lon Hyde had purchased 3 lots in the Woodcock addition and started building one. Right, The sale of 427 NW 34 to Mr. Hyde.

Corvallis which their father (M. S. Woodcock) founded. Their father served as mayor of Corvallis (ca 1901- 1903) followed by his son CH Woodcock who served as mayor for two different terms (1923-1925 and 1943 – 1947). They advertised College Hill lots for sale in the West Corvallis Addition e.g. (3/21/1931).

This suggests that the Messers purchased 427 NW 34 from Mr. Hyde. The Gibsons who purchased the house next door at 435 were related as Mrs. Messer and Mrs. Gibson were sisters. William Messer owned Independent Lumber Co. starting in about 1917. In 1925 Vane Gibson became Messer’s partner and eventually purchased the business when Mr. Messer retired in 1942. Mr. Gibson sold the company in 1954.



Fig. 5. The Malvern. An example of a house with plans available by mail from the William A. Radford Co. 1925.

Independent Lumber was located at SW 6<sup>th</sup> and Western, the Messers lived at SW 7<sup>th</sup> and Adams, and Mr. Hyde lived nearby at SW 10<sup>th</sup> and Adams. One can imagine a close relationship between the owners of the lumber company and Mr. Hyde in combination with Mr. Woodcock. The Messers and Gibsons wanted rental property and had access to wholesale building supplies; Mr. Hyde had proven building skills and needed land and material, and the Woodcocks had the land and financing through their bank.

The 400 block of NW 34th has 4 or 5 houses, both stucco and wood sided that are similar in style to the houses built by Hyde elsewhere. They were built between 1925 and 1928 and were termed ‘Norman farmhouse’ style in the College Hill application for a historic neighborhood designation. The time period matches when Mr. Hyde was building, although the contractors are mostly unknown. Mr. Hyde likely based his house designs on catalogs that were readily available at building supply stores (Fig. 5). For a reasonable price the house design company would supply blue prints and a materials list.

At least part of the time, Mr. Hyde lived in his newly built houses as he attempted to sell them, e.g. the SW 12<sup>th</sup> ST house in 1928, and at 962 SW Adams in 1928 – 1929 (see ad, Fig. 6). He may have encountered financial difficulties (e.g. The Great Depression) as there was a judgement against him in 1930 that resulted in 940 SW 10<sup>th</sup> being auctioned off. He left Corvallis and was a carpenter at an oil refinery in El Segundo, CA in 1930, and was listed as living back in Seaside as a cabinet maker in the 1940 City Directory. In the 1950 census he was listed as working as a watchman at a lumber mill in Brownsmead, Oregon.

Ads/articles that appeared in the Corvallis Gazette Times about Mr. Hyde.

**2 ENGLISH type, one bungalow, \$2900 to \$3950. Terms, L. M. Hyde, 315 S. 12th. 10/1/1927 915tf**

**WANTED—City lots for cash, good location, unimproved near pavement, only bargains considered. L. M. Hyde, 962 Adams St. 1/20/1928**

**PRIVATE money wanted on new homes. Lon M. Hyde, 962 Adams. 2/1/1928 c210t2**

**Lon M. Hyde to May L. McFarland, L. 9. B. 16, Wilkins Add. 8/14/1928. 423 NW 16th**

**CAUTION**  
**DON'T BUY UNTIL YOU SEE ME.**  
 Only two left to pick from. \$4500 and \$4800. Terms. Have the two best homes for the money. Just phone 1027-J and I will call for you at any time, or see me at my home at 962 Adams St. 820tf  
**LON M. HYDE, Builder.**  
 1 ENGLISH type 5-room stucco, strictly modern home, 415 S. 10, a block from campus; been used three months. \$200 reduction and \$125 improvement. Your gain, \$325. Cash \$800, bal. 42.50 per month. Phone 1027-J, Lon M. Hyde, 962 Adams. 824tf  
 8/25/1928

**MODERN homes for sale, six to choose from, \$3000 to \$5600. Terms. LON M. HYDE 12tf 962 Adams 1/22/1929**

**FOR SALE—REAL ESTATE**  
**THIS IS WHAT YOU GET**  
 for \$4500.00  
 Six room new English Type Home, including  
 3 bed rooms  
 breakfast nook  
 complete builtins  
 Main floor all oak  
 Sanded, filled, varnished  
 Waxed, polished  
 Woodwork, 3 coats enamel  
 Fireplace  
 Furnace  
 Full basement  
 Garage 12 x 20  
 Lot  
 Paved street  
 Sidewalk  
 Sewer  
 Water meter  
 Terms:  
 \$1500.00 or less down  
 \$36.42 or more per mo.  
 P. S. ONE SOLD, ONE LEFT.  
 "Well" come look it over 820t2  
**LON M. HYDE**  
 1027-J 962 Adams

Fig. 6. Ad for 962 SW Adams. 1928.

**Chapter 12**  
**William Chambers Crawford (1850-1900) – Biography**  
December 30, 2020

**Work as a jeweler; partnership with JD Howell.** Information on W.C. Crawford (Fig. 1) comes from three main sources: obituaries published in the Oregonian (4/18/1900 -via ancestry.com) and the GT (4/20/1900), and various articles in the Gazette Times Archives from about 1880-1900 and other newspapers quoted by a rail road website (see below). The articles are indicated by the dates in brackets. W.C. Crawford's careers were so diverse that it seems like there might have been several different W.C. Crawfords: jeweler, builder, railroad developer, opera house owner, flour mill owner, masonic leader, and minister, but all the careers overlap indicating that they were the same person. W.C. Crawford was born in Viney Grove, Ark., May 13, 1850 and moved with his parents to Oregon in 1870 settling in Oregon City. In 1872 he started attending Corvallis College and 'graduated in the scientific course in 1875'. From 1875, Crawford had a jewelry shop initially with M.L. White and subsequently by himself in Graham and Well's drug store where he sold silverware, clocks, watches, jewelry, spectacles, and also repaired these items. By 1888, there was a new jewelry business of W.C. Crawford and J.D. Howell that also included optician work; they advertised use of the 'Johnson Optical Co.'s patent eye meter'. JD Howell was the son of one of Crawford's sisters, Martha Naomi Crawford Howell, who was married to Dr. Squire Davis Howell. One can speculate that WC was a mentor to JD and taught him the jewelry business and partnered with him for a few years as Crawford & Howell and eventually turned it over to him. By 1894 Crawford had moved to Portland and Howell's 'new jewelry store' was independent of Crawford (12/2/1894) and he also managed the Corvallis opera house (see below). Later JD ran for county clerk in 1916 on a tax cutting platform and lost badly (3671 to 1284), but was a successful peach farmer - the peach king of Kiger Island (Blue Ribbon Peach Farm) (9/14/1909).



Fig. 1. W.C. (1850-1900) and Viola (1853-1910) Crawford.

**Railroad ventures.** WC Crawford was involved in at least two rail road ventures. In 1886 he was part of a company incorporated to build and operate a railroad from Junction city to Yaquina Bay via Alsea. One of his associates in that project was George R. Farra (1843-1923), a physician with whom he constructed and owned the Crawford & Farra building, and where Dr. Farra had his offices. The proposed railroad was to be called the Willamette, Alsea & Yaquina Railroad (5/7/1886) and apparently was never built. Subsequently, Crawford and his nephew-jeweler partner, JD Howell (Crawford & Howell), were involved in a contract to construct a 6-mile railroad spur from Jacksonville to Medford (1/30/1891) eventually called the Roque River Valley Railroad (RRVRR). Details of this venture are exhaustively summarized in

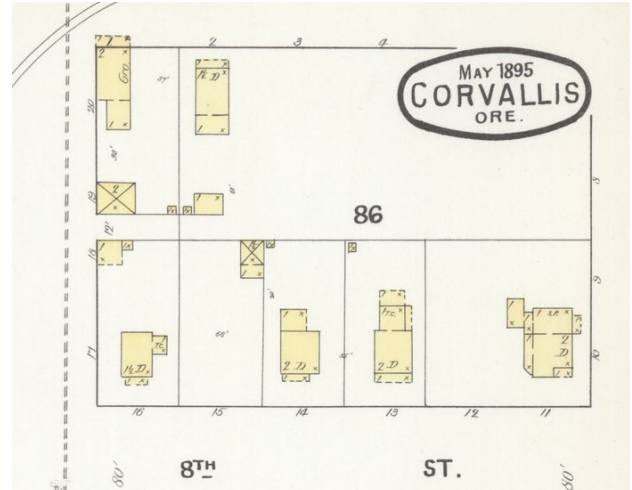
<http://truwe.sohs.org/files/rrvrr.html>. They started work in late October and were offered a \$20,000 bonus if they completed it by Jan. 1, 1891, about 10 weeks; over 400 ft/day. (9/12/1890; 10/24/1890). They appear to have somehow made the deadline, but all did not go well. There were problems, e.g. reported by a Jacksonville newspaper (12/19/1890) 'It is announced that Crawford, Howell & Co. are unable to proceed with the building of the Jacksonville-Medford railroad and have abandoned their contract. Several carloads of rails are at Medford, but, as the freight on them was not paid, the railroad company would not deliver them. ... it is probable that arrangements will be made to complete the road. Crawford, Howell & Co. have spent a very small amount of money, not having paid anybody or for anything. How they expect to build this road without employing some capital of their own is a mystery.' Then on 12/26/1890 'A freight train on the Southern Pacific attempted to pass over a bridge, near Albany, one day last week, which was undergoing repairs, and the effect was that the engine got across safely, but three flatcars, one loaded with railroad iron for the Jacksonville-Medford railroad, and two with lumber, fell into the stream twenty feet below and were crushed to splinters. The other portion of the train became detached and stopped upon the brink of the chasm. No one was hurt.' A test run on the railroad apparently also encountered problems: 'a locomotive was borrowed by Crawford, Howell & Co., to make the first trip...but it proved too heavy for the road and the effort was abandoned'(1/9/1891). And then in the Oregonian (1/11/1891) 'It has proved a great thing for that country that Honeyman, DeHart & Co. concluded to take the road off the hands of contractors Crawford & Howell, in order to save the money they already had invested in the rails furnished.' Then the Oregonian reported (1/17/1891) 'The first train over the Jacksonville & Medford reached Jacksonville today amid the greatest demonstrations of joy. J. D. Howell, one of the contractors, and all the prominent business men of Medford were on board. Deafened by booming anvils, screeching whistles, ringing bells and shouting multitudes, the Jacksonville & Medford incorporators witnessed the first trip over the new road. The train returned to Medford this evening. The greatest enthusiasm still prevails in Jacksonville. Honeyman & DeHart, half owners of the road, have let the contract for the immediate construction of the Jacksonville depot.' Crawford and Howell filed articles of incorporation for a company (The Rogue River Valley Company), 'to construct and equip a railroad from Medford, in Jackson County, to Jacksonville, and two miles beyond' (2/13/1891). Wm Honeyman and E.J. Dehart of Portland were the other partners. The latter were a major hardware wholesaler in Portland. However, it was reported (2/27/1891) that 'William A. Buchanan, secretary of the Thompson-DeHart Company, returned to Portland last week from Jacksonville, where he had been looking after the Jacksonville-Medford railroad, which has recently passed into the firm's hands.' No mention of Crawford and Howell. And then 'Crawford, Howell & Co. have been sued on contracts made at the time of the building of the R.R.V.R.R., the amount aggregating many thousand dollars. They claim that the notes are forgeries and without consideration' (*Democratic Times*, Jacksonville (8/12/1892)).

Finally, 25 years later, a description of 'two breezy promoters' who were almost certainly Crawford and Howell, appeared in the Oregonian (7/4/1915) as follows: '**City Defrauded of \$25,000.** Twenty-five years ago two breezy promoters came to the sleepy town of Jacksonville, and after various conferences with the City Council and street gatherings persuaded the city to

raise \$25,000 for a railroad to Medford. Jacksonville was the county seat and nothing more, and Medford was barely a post office, but tales of Southern Pacific development and opportunity to sell out at a handsome figure turned the trick and the deal was put through. As soon as the promoters obtained the cash they flew to parts of the world unknown and never have been heard of since. Checking up accounts, Jacksonville found it had some worthless bonds, five miles of track and the humiliation of being sold. It was also discovered that the steel rails secured from the Honeyman Hardware Company, of Portland, had not been paid for, and the road consequently fell into the hands of this well-known Portland concern.' The railroad was not particularly profitable and it changed hands a number of times and was eventually shutdown and then removed in 1937.

**Other work/activities.** In addition to the railroad, Crawford also was involved in constructing the Crawford and Farra building at 340-344 SW 2nd Street in 1882 (7/14/1882). He later sold his 50% interest to E. Allen of Allen and Woodward, Druggists, for \$5500 (3/28/1890). He also owned the Corvallis Opera House which was a gathering place for concerts, plays, meetings, etc. and served as a roller-skating rink. On 3/7/1895 he sold the Opera House to S.S. Spencer for \$4000. There was an underlying mortgage of \$1200 held by William Groves (2/17/1897). This business appears to have gone bankrupt and W.C. Crawford was held partly responsible (see below). Free Masonry was pervasive during Crawford's lifetime and he was very active, appearing in ads for meetings as W. C. Crawford W.M. (Worshipful Master?) and W. C. Crawford H.P. (High Priest?). Crawford left Corvallis in about 1891 and went into business with Edgerton Ezra Cooper (1853-1940) running a flouring mill in Sheridan (9/25/1891); G.R. Farra was a financial backer. Cooper was G.R. Farra's brother-in-law – he was married to the sister (Fanny Hamilton Cooper) of Amna Hamilton Farra. He was a civil engineer who was involved in surveying the line for the Yaquina Bay railroad (10/1/1875) and was also involved in the construction of the Astoria and South Coast railroad (1/23/1891) and eventually worked for Southern Pacific. For the flour mill venture, Crawford 'established himself in a wholesale office' in Portland. Despite the long history of Crawford working with Dr. Farra and members of his family (E.E.Cooper) on a variety of projects, something went wrong here, and in 1900 Crawford sued Farra for \$3000 for 'difference of opinion over transactions involved in the management of the flouring mill at Sheridan in which both parties had an ownership'. The suit was settled in Crawford's favor for \$136 (1/19/1900). Farra appealed this judgement.

**The Crawford House: home or rental property?** Today, W.C. Crawford is remembered because of the Italianate-style house at 814 SW Adams (Fig. 2) that is on the Corvallis local historic registry, as is the Crawford and Farra commercial brick building on SW 2<sup>nd</sup> ST. There is only one possible reference to the Crawford house that I could find (7/24/1885) in which he suffered a fall while 'assisting in the construction of a building for himself' - the location was not given. The Crawford family was listed as living on 1<sup>st</sup> street by the 1880 census. In 1883, there is a reference to him building a new house on 1<sup>st</sup> ST (7/20/1883). In 1885 it was reported that he was concerned regarding a survey for a railroad line proposed to be built close the SE corner of his 1<sup>st</sup> street property (9/25/1885). This line was built by 1890 and would have been uncomfortably close to his house (Fig. 3). Therefore, we know that he lived on 1<sup>st</sup> street from 1880 to 1885. He still likely



lived in Corvallis in 1891 because his son Carl (age ~14) was reported to have been late for school (2/20/1891) (A weekly list of tardy students was published in the newspaper). He may have built the Crawford house in 1885 to get away from the railroad.

Fig. 2. Left panel: The Crawford house, 814 SW Adams circa 1885. right: Map showing three 8<sup>th</sup> ST houses likely owned by WC Crawford (lower right).

It should have been possible to determine where Crawford lived in 1890 from the US Census. However, those documents were destroyed by a fire at the Commerce Department building in Washington DC in 1921. The quality of the construction of the Crawford house was very basic. There is no ornamentation on the inside and the floors are tongue and groove planks that were covered with layers of linoleum. The 5' wide 1-story pop out on the east side may have been an afterthought or later addition as the East-West floor boards are all 5'-long and span the 5' with no interior floor joists. The floor boards are not staggered like a normally planned floor structure would be. The standard of construction and lack of embellishment could indicate that it was constructed as a rental. In 1892, probably after Crawford moved to Portland, he was assessed for back taxes (\$8.18) on this property (12/23/1892). The property described is 100' x 200' on the NE corner of the block which, based on the 1895 Sanborn map, would include 4 lots and 3

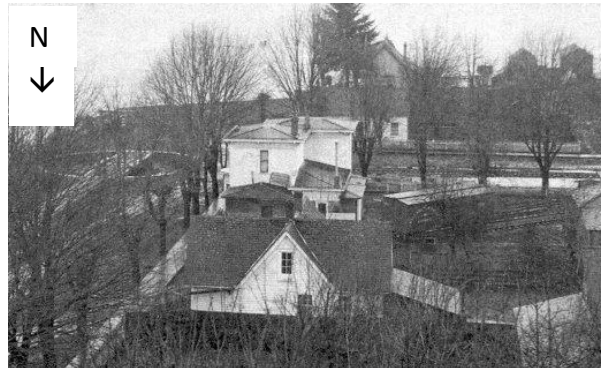


Fig. 3. Left panel. Sanborn map (1888-1890) showing the railroad line built through the SE corner of the Crawford property on 1<sup>st</sup> ST. Right panel. Crawford house in foreground showing a boxcar near his house on 1<sup>st</sup> ST . The railroad turntable is shown at the left. Photo: Pernot Bros. ca 1890.

houses (402, 420, 430 S. 8<sup>th</sup> ST) (Fig. 2). Therefore, Crawford may have been adding to his rental portfolio when he constructed the Crawford house. In addition to this property, Crawford was also reported in the Albany paper to have 1/3 interest in a 30-acre prune and apple orchard near Philomath (2/7/1894).

**Financial/Legal Problems.** Although Crawford was involved in multiple businesses and bought and sold properties for thousands of dollars there is evidence of legal judgements for and against him that may indicate financial difficulties. For example, in 1897 a notice was published of a 'Sheriff's Sale' of the opera house and its contents (5/8/1897) 'on a decree ... in favor of William Groves and against W. C. Crawford, Viola Crawford, Septimus S. Spencer and Hattie L. Spencer for \$1586.71 ... to sell ... Lot No. 6 (6) in Block No. 22 in the city of Corvallis... together with ... all the chairs -400 in number-, all curtains, 3 stoves and pipes, lamps, benches, stage fixtures and scenery, one piano (Fischer's upright grand), three dozen roller skates, electric light fixtures,... at public auction'... In 1905, the opera house manager was listed as Frank Groves on a historic plaque at its location. This suggests that the Grove family obtained it in lieu of the judgement against WC Crawford and associates. In addition to the opera house, there were lawsuits involving a rail road project and the flour mill (see above); others include one in 1893 by Levi Oren who bought the Crawford house in 1891 (11/8/1893), and another by William Groves for \$600 (11/17/1903).

**Obituaries/The Rev. Crawford passed away at age 50 of tuberculosis.** In the Oregonian W.C. Crawford obituary (4/18/1900;4/19/1900), little of the above is mentioned except for his masonic involvement in Corvallis. It's as if the move to Portland after the railroad fiasco was his 'road to Damascus'. He was referred to as Rev. W. C. Crawford and it indicates that after he went to Portland in 1891, he became a minister of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church 'doing transient work, but was not on any fixed station. For a great many years, he was general secretary of the Oregon Synod of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and afterwards was made secretary of the Portland Presbytery...' It should be noted that he was also referred to as the Rev. W.C. Crawford a few times in Corvallis (e.g. 3/21/1884), but I could find no evidence that he had a church.

Viola (Briggs) Crawford (Fig. 1) passed away in 1910 at age 58. She was born in Iowa in 1853 and at 6 months of age she 'crossed the plains to Oregon' with her parents (Oregonian 10/13/1910). She married W.C. Crawford in 1875 (9/17/1875) and for a time was a music teacher at the State Agricultural College in Corvallis.

#### **Further notes on W.C. Crawford and J.D. Howell.**

Due to the incongruity of a jewelry business, railroad building, construction and farming interests, a lingering question about W.C. Crawford is whether there were two or more W.C. Crawfords in Corvallis in the 1880s, one a jeweler, working out of the Graham and Well's drug store, and the other a railroad builder. The same would have to be speculated for J.D. Howell; there were two J. D. Howells, one a jeweler, and the other the railroad builder and by some probability the two RR builders and the two jewelers were different pairs of W.C. Crawford and J. D. Howells. In 1888 the population of Corvallis was 1800 people (noted on Sanborn map). We know who the Crawford and Howell jewelers were, but there is no mention that I could find of

another set of WC Crawford and JD Howells. There was a child of W. C. Crawford born in 1877, who was also a W.C. Crawford, but he would have been too young to be in the rail road. Also, there was only one obituary for a J.D. Howell and two for WC Crawford that I could find and the latter were for the same person. Both the JD and WC obituaries mentioned them being jewelers in the Graham and Well's drugstore. In addition, the news reports on WC and JD end at or shortly after they passed away suggesting that they were the only WC Crawford and JD Howell. However, nowhere in the obituaries was the construction of the RRVRR mentioned – likely it was something that they wished to be forgotten!

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Mary Gallagher of the Benton County Historical Society for supplying many of the photographs used herein and David Livingston for his enthusiasm and comments.