

— SPRING 2015 —

# THE AGATE

JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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# Welcome to the New Agate!

**T**his is the third issue of our “new-look” AGATE, and it represents for us something of an experiment. In cooperation with Tony Ahern, publisher of the Madras *Pioneer*, copies of this issue are going out with this week’s *Pioneer*, and you will notice that some pages include advertisements from supportive local businesses. Our aim with the first innovation is to expose THE AGATE and through it the Jefferson County Historical Society to more people in our area; the reason for the ads is to help defray the cost of the extra printing of the issue.

But it is an experiment; Historical Society members who are not Pioneer subscribers will receive their copies as usual by mail. And after the issue has circulated, we will “take soundings” on what readers think about it, especially our JCHS membership. In any event, we do not expect to make circulation of THE AGATE through the Pioneer a regular thing. Let us know what you think!

The contents of this issue span a considerable amount of Jefferson County history, from two features on Madras during World War Two-- one on the Madras USO center and one on the last days and letters of a young pilot-trainee at the base-- to a survey of homestead orchards around the county, still bearing fruit, that date back to the beginning of the 20th century. Plus notice of a peculiar painting of Madras, painted in the 1950s by a distinguished artist; also reports on current doings of the JCHS, including a message from our new president, Lottie Holcomb. We hope you enjoy this issue, as much as we have enjoyed putting it together!

For future issues of THE AGATE—published in March and September—if you have suggestions about topics you’d like us to feature, please let us know. And if you have been thinking about writing something “historical” yourself, let’s talk it over. Feel free to contact Jane Ahern at 541-475-3610 or by e-mail at [janeahern@rocketmail.com](mailto:janeahern@rocketmail.com) or Jarold Ramsey at 541-475-5390 or [ramseyjarold@yahoo.com](mailto:ramseyjarold@yahoo.com).

**Cover photo: The Madras Community Hall, used 1943-4 as a USO center.**



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The mission of the Society is to research, gather and preserve the history of Jefferson County and Central Oregon for public education through the display of artifacts and archives.

**Editor:** Jane Ahern  
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**Publisher:** Jerry Ramsey

# The USO in Madras

by Jane Ahern

Looking through the Madras *Pioneer* issues from 1941-1945, one is struck by how profoundly World War II affected the lives of each and every American. The war was thousands of miles away and yet it was right here, even in the small towns of Central Oregon.

While some 323 local “boys” went off to fight the war, their families who remained behind in Jefferson County joined the rest of the nation in embracing all the various war efforts that now seem iconic. They rationed tires, sugar, shoes, farm equipment, and more. They bought war bonds, collected scrap metal, saved their used cooking oil, raised endless quotas of money for different causes, and grew victory gardens.

So when the U.S. Army established a pilot training base at the Madras airport in 1943, the county’s leading citizens naturally moved to set up a USO center to support the men stationed nearby.

For those who need a refresher, USO stands for United Services Organizations. The name refers to the six national organizations that joined forces in February, 1941: the National Catholic Community Service, the Salvation Army, the National Jewish Welfare Board, the Travelers Aid Society, the YWCA, and the YMCA.

The purpose of the USO was to help maintain the morale of US servicemen at home and abroad by providing recreational opportunities and, sometimes, a home away from home where the troops—many of them still teenagers—could be catered to both by motherly figures and by wholesome young ladies.

According to Meghan K. Winchell in her

book *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses During World War II* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2008), a less-publicized purpose for the USO was to expose the men to the civilizing influence of women. Put less delicately, venereal disease was a real problem for the military as penicillin was not in widespread use until 1944.

The hope was that the men would spend their time with the lovely yet chaste junior hostesses, chaperoned by mature women who would remind them of their mothers, rather than with prostitutes or “loose women” who might give them a disease. Some also hoped to steer the men away from alcohol.

On the national level, the USO set high standards for its hostesses. The preferred way of recruiting senior hostesses was via church groups or women’s organizations. Women who were not volunteering as members of such an organization were theoretically required to provide two references, although the practice varied by location.

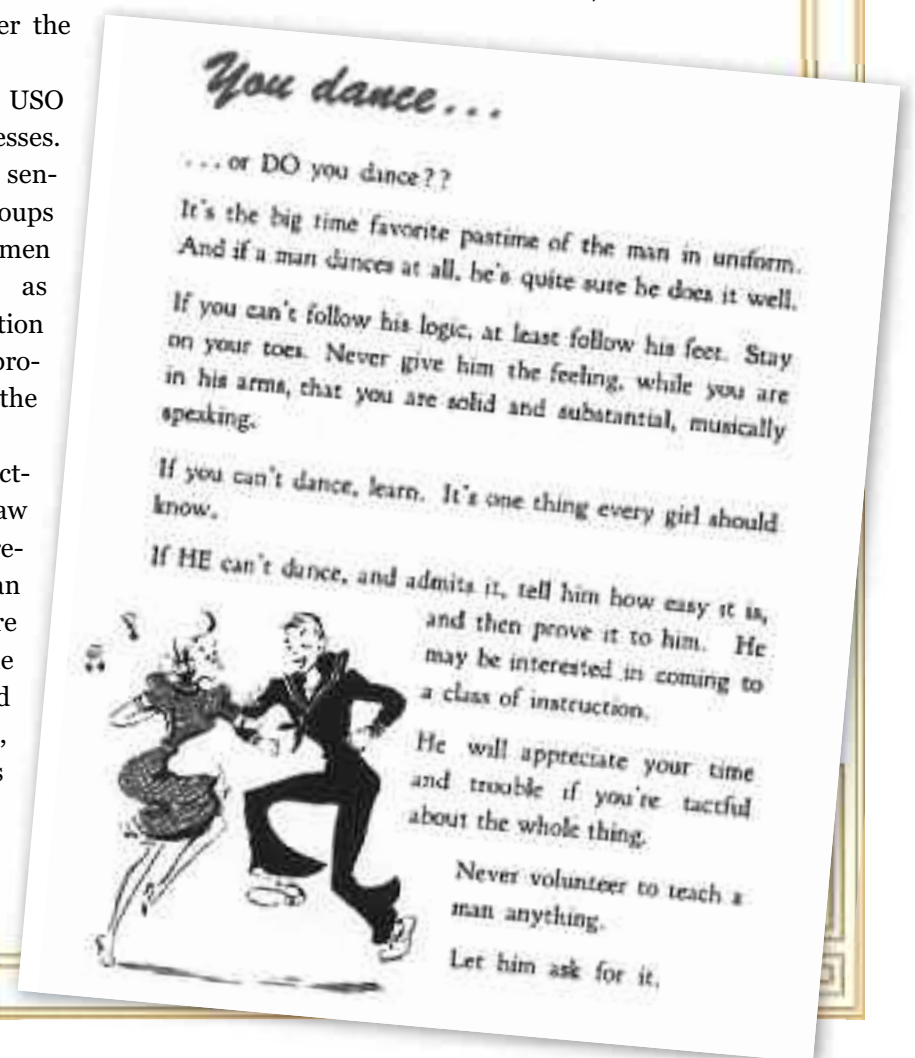
Junior hostesses were expected to be attractive enough draw the men to the USO, and yet respectable enough to maintain an utterly wholesome atmosphere in the clubs. In larger cities the young women were recruited from church groups, sororities, member organizations such as

**A page from “If you are a Junior Hostess”**

the YWCA, and even from department store personnel. The national organization wanted young women to fill out applications, provide references, and submit to personal interviews. It was meant to be a selective process in which not all young women were accepted.

Winchell says that many local USO clubs gave “charm” lessons to junior hostesses. “The national USO distributed its rules for junior hostesses along with charm information to all USO clubs,” she writes.

A training manual, written by Nell Giles based on the experiences of USO junior hostesses at the Boston YWCA and entitled “If You are a Junior Hostess,” is full of





unintentionally amusing gems, such as “How well a man fights depends a little on how well you’ve done your part in the U.S.O. and how nearly ideal an American girl you are.”

Wondering how to approach a GI? Giles suggests, “Edge up on him. No beginning is necessary. Just mysteriously be where he is and SMILE.”

The efforts of the national USO to enforce rules and standards for senior and junior hostesses were admirable, but they probably did not trickle down to small towns like Madras. There may have been less class distinction in this largely agricultural community than in big cities and with a population of less than 500 people, it would be hard to justify turning away anyone who was willing to help.

The USO Camp Shows, featuring the biggest stars of the day performing for the troops overseas, were the most glamorous arm of the organization, along with “Stage Door Canteens” in big cities, where the GIs could catch a show or go to a party any night they had off.

But there were hundreds of more modest USO centers around the nation and Madras’ was one of them.

## Hurry up and Wait— A Year and a Half of Starts and Stops

As early as December of 1942, about a month before the airfield opened, a committee met in Madras to plan for a local USO center. In January 1943, the group gave itself a name—Jefferson County USO Council—and sent an application to the USO office in Portland.

The council deliberately included representatives from a wide variety of local organizations. Judge T.A. Power, representing the county, was the Chairman. Vice Chair Rev. Wesley Graves represented local churches, Secretary Mrs. Ralph Van Wert represented the Sahalee Club, and Treasurer Mrs. R.W. Cook represented the granges.

Other members were Mrs. Homer Thomas, Eastern Star; Melvin Spitze, representing the schools; W.A. Hemmelgarn, representing the press; J.W. Warren, the lodges; Mrs. Julia Dussault, the Legion Auxiliary; Mrs. Lewis Irving, the Garden Club; Dr. V.S. Howard, Chamber of Commerce; Maccie Conroy, the Community Club; Fred L. Rodman, American Legion; and Elyse Dee, the Rebekas.

It seemed as though the Jefferson County USO was off to a good start, but the project stalled almost immediately.

On February 18, 1943, a month after the USO Council sent its application to the USO office in Portland, Madras *Pioneer* publisher W.A. Hemmelgarn writes in his column “About People and Stuff”: “We are wondering what has become of the USO that was supposed to be here for the Army boys at the Base?”

As the USO’s information officer, Hemmelgarn should have been in a position to disseminate information about the USO, but instead here he was helplessly asking his readers for any news.

The regional USO continued to string our local council along for several more months, simply failing to send anyone to Madras to take charge of the USO center. In the end, the Madras USO did not open until the last few days of May, 1943—almost six months after planning got underway.

In the meantime, some efforts were made to entertain the military men. Local ladies tried to set up a temporary USO in the Edward Thomas Recreation Center, but it seems to have fizzled out.

The airfield attracted a traveling variety show, the Wing-Dingers, which performed at the community hall. The entertainers were members of the 2nd Air Force who had been performers in civilian life. Buddy Lake was the MC, joined by Buddy Lewis, and Max Artis (“the Fred Astaire of the Air Corps”), with music by The Four Off-Beats, featuring

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Jim Hall on his electric Hammond organ, Gordon Munro on drums, William Whipple on trumpet and Norman Edlan on saxophone.

The civilian girls who worked at the airfield put on a dance in the community hall. And those same girls formed a basketball team that played against town teams around Central Oregon, as did the GIs at the base.

Still, by the middle of March, the lack of an established USO center was becoming enough of a morale problem that the airfield's commanding officer, Major Arnold, spoke at a Chamber of Commerce meeting on the urgency of finding some sort of regular entertainment for the men.

W.A. Hemmelgarn's "About People and Stuff" column in the March 25, 1943 *Pioneer* states that a neighboring city (he coyly declines to mention its name, but it was probably Prineville) had invited the men from the Madras airfield to visit its soon-to-be-open USO center, since Madras didn't have one.

Alarmed at the idea that the airmen might go elsewhere to spend their money, Hemmelgarn urged, "It is understood that the hall for the local USO set-up has been arranged for, but so far no one has arrived in town to take over. This USO business should be pushed and pushed hard until we find out just what is what."

Major Arnold did in fact visit the Prineville USO and made arrangements to send men from the Madras airfield over in

trucks, at least until the Madras USO could get up and running.

Finally, in April of 1943, USO official Robert L. Titus showed up, bringing big promises to match the local council's big plans, not all of which seem to have materialized. The regional USO was initially expected to provide one or even two paid staff members to direct the center and there was talk of adding on to the community hall "until it will



**Interior of the Madras USO Center.**

resemble a group of buildings," according to a report in the *Pioneer*.

However, there is no record in the *Pioneer* of the community hall being expanded. On the contrary, an extant photo (see front cover) shows the USO as a single building with little else around it.

Instead, the community hall's kitchen and snack bar were remodeled and the front of the building painted. A new USO sign was put up, blue letters on a white background.

The community was asked to donate furnishings, especially rugs. The photo on this page shows the interior, a large room with a wood stove, kitchen area, and, indeed, rather bare floors.

After making Jefferson County wait several months for a USO employee to come start things up at the center, the regional USO appointed someone who had been here all along: Mrs. Arnold, the wife of the airfield's commanding officer. There is no mention in the *Pioneer* as to whether she was paid for her work, but she seemed to be just as ambitious as the local USO council.

Mrs. Arnold promised to contact every woman in Jefferson County to volunteer at the USO. Women were needed to sew and mend for the servicemen, to bake cookies, and to serve as hostesses at the center. The girls of Jefferson County were called on to entertain the men as junior hostesses.

Although the overall operation was smaller than originally anticipated, at peak times the USO volunteers put in a lot of hours and dished out plenty of comfort food.

The *Pioneer* reported that the grand opening on May 29 was well attended by the airmen as well as some WAACS from Camp Abbot (located where Sunriver is now). The dance featured music from two jukeboxes, plus live music provided by an accordion-playing Private Amideo Pasquale from the airfield and a Warm Springs boy--not identi-

fied by name, but almost certainly Gib Kalama—who played several numbers on the piano.

The USO center served more than 150 dozen cookies and 3,000 cups of coffee in June of 1943, its first full month of operation, Mrs. Arnold reported to the *Pioneer*, and hostesses had put in more than 240 hours of volunteer service.

Mrs. Arnold organized the volunteer work around the groups represented on

the USO council. The first week the USO was open, she and Senior Hostess Effie Pillette scrambled around and got by the best they could with whatever volunteers they could muster.

The second week of operation, Eastern Star was responsible for providing the volunteers. The center was open every night for coffee, cookies, and socializing, with a dance on Saturday and a buffet dinner on

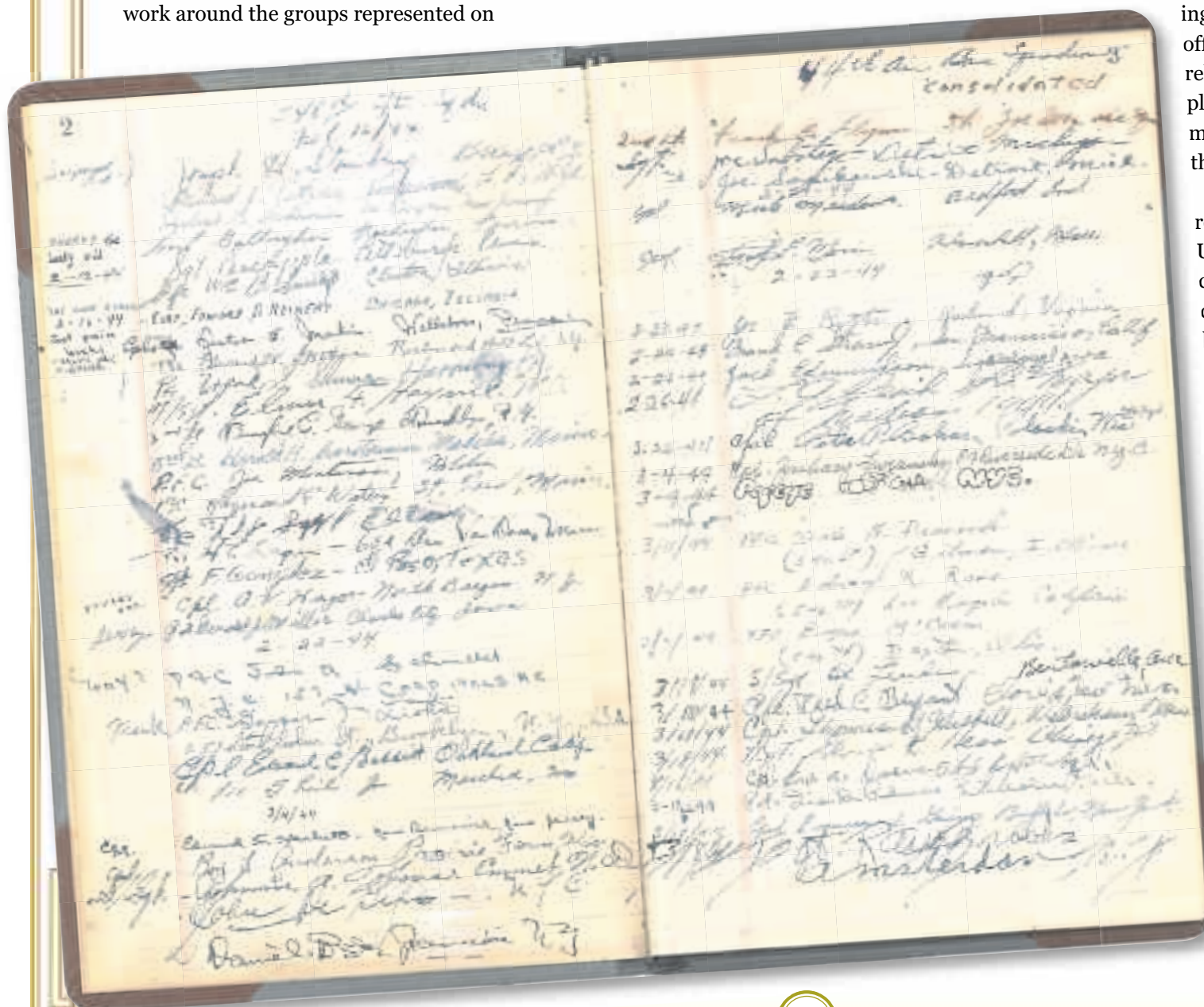
Sunday. The Rebekahs took the third week and the local churches took the fourth week.

As far as we know, the organizations stuck to the same format until August of 1943, when there was a break in the action due to the first group of men being transferred from the airfield. A new group came in immediately and USO activities resumed quickly.

In September of 1943, having successfully gotten the USO off the ground, Mrs. Arnold was released from her duties and replaced by a paid USO staff member from out of town by the name of Robert Weis.

The following month, Weis reported 3,160 visitors to the USO in September, with 2,000 cups of coffee and 168 dozen cookies served. November brought 960 visitors who accepted 900 cups of coffee and 160 dozen cookies.

And then the Jefferson County USO's heyday came to an abrupt end, six months after it started. The 318th Squadron of the 88th Bombing Group, 2nd Air Force,



Pages from the USO register saved by Leita Richardson.

which had been training pilots on B-17 bombers, moved out of the airfield altogether.

Major Arnold was transferred to the Walla Walla Airbase, much to the dismay of both his staff and the civilians of Jefferson County. Major Arnold and his wife had been active in the community and well-liked by all. [On a side note, the Major's wife was always referred to in the *Pioneer* and in the USO guest register as Mrs. Arnold or Mrs. J.P. Arnold. In the many times she was mentioned, her own first name was never given.] Madras and the airfield personnel said goodbye to the couple at a reception at the USO center.

The 2nd Air Force's departure left only a skeleton crew at the airfield until its new occupants, the 546th Fighter Squadron, 475th Fighter Group, 4th Air Force could move in. The *Pioneer* made reference to a rumor that 1,500 men would be stationed at the Madras Airfield by the middle of March, but according to pilot trainee Robert Cranston (See Jarold Ramsey's story "A Young Pilot's Last Letters from Madras Air Field in 1944" in this issue), the next group included only 65 pilot-trainees.

Weis was reassigned to the Bend USO in December, with the understanding that another paid director would be assigned to Madras if needed. As it turned out, one was not needed.

For the rest of the war, the population at the airfield came and went. When a military unit left the airfield, there would be a stretch during which only a small group remained and the USO center was not well enough attended to warrant keeping it open all the time.

During those times, the USO would be open just a few nights per week or only on Saturdays and Sundays. Effie Pillette took over as director and local organizations continued to provide the volunteers.

Groups such as the Madras Community Club or the Local AF of L no. 2941 would often sponsor a Saturday-night dance at the "community hall," with no mention of the USO. Dan Macy's orchestra usually provided the music and the advertised charges were typically \$1 per couple, 25 cents for single ladies, and free for GIs. There were just two more periods of significant USO activity, from February-March, 1944, when Cranston had his fatal accident, and October-November of the same year. The USO closed for good on November 26, 1944.

### A Remnant of the Times

**T**he Madras Community Hall was demolished many years ago, but at least one artifact of the USO remains. Leita Richardson, who served as an advisor to the USO

junior hostesses, held on to a USO guest register from 1944 and later donated it to the JCHS.

The register covers USO activities from February 9, 1944 to the end of May and then another block of time from October to November of 1944. The men who signed the register were from all over the United States—New York, Illinois, Texas, Iowa, Pennsylvania, California, Alaska, to name just a few.

In the margins of the register, next to some of the names, are nicknames or little jokes—"Looey the Lug," "Tonsorial Artiste," "Just plain lucky," "Praying for Corporal," "Jersey Joe."

The airmen usually listed their ranks in front of their names. Most were privates, privates first class, or corporals. Officers had their own club at the airfield, so they did not visit the USO for the most part.

Here and there, a Jefferson County name appears, apparently servicemen home on leave. Lynden M. Watts, W.V. Thomas, Jesse Le Vern Eades, Frank J. Grant, and J. Willis Freeman all signed the register, listing Madras or Culver as home. Staff Sergeant Edward Landau listed Madras as his future home.

In the middle of the guest register are nine pages of names and mailing addresses of airmen, all in the same handwriting and dating from the airfield's opening in Janu-



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Jefferson County Water Festival, May 18, 1946

ary, 1943 up to April, 1944. Even Major Arnold's home town, Denver, CO, is given, though not his street address.

Two guests who signed the register on Feb. 12, 1944, Cpl Joseph C. Hojnacki and Romeo Crepeau, appear to have each written the poems "Just Remember" and "Always" in the very back of the book. Hojnacki's handwriting is the more legible, so it looks as though he copied Crepeau's poems so that people could read them.

The last two USO guests signed in on Nov. 26, 1944—the last day of operation for the Madras USO.

The guest register is a precious piece of local history containing information not available elsewhere. It gives us a glimpse of the servicemen who were stationed at the Madras airfield via their handwriting, their jokes or comments written in the margins, and poems that resonated with them.

## Recollections of Two Junior Hostesses

Unfortunately, the details provided by the guest register leave us guessing. They are tantalizing, but they don't really get to the good stuff. What was it like to suddenly have this unprecedented influx of young men from all over the country? What were the men like and what kinds of interactions did

they have with the locals? How did their presence change the atmosphere in Madras and the rest of the county? Where did their military careers take them, after Madras? For those who survived the war, did any of them ever re-visit Madras in later years?

Jackie Bryant.

Madras and Antelope resident Barbara Borthwick Metteer does not appear on either list, but nevertheless did volunteer a handful of times as a junior hostess.

Barbara was a 15-year-old high school freshman when the USO center opened in May, 1943. Her family had a farm near Antelope, so she and her younger sister Janet roomed with Ken and Alice Sawyer in Madras during the week in order to attend high school in what is now known as Westside Elementary.

Mrs. Sawyer was a member of one of the local or-

ganizations that sponsored USO activities (probably Eastern Star), and it was she who recruited both Barbara and Janet to serve as junior hostesses at some of the events.

Barbara does not recall submitting an application or going through any training. She and Janet simply accompanied Mrs. Sawyer.

"I think we only served coffee and tea and pop and maybe some cookies," Barbara said. "I don't remember serving sandwiches or anything like that."

"I was pretty bashful when I was young. I had a little hard time going out and talking to strange boys," Barbara continued. She greeted the young men when they came in, but



**Above: LaRee Cram Smoot and Helen Marston Rogers, 1944. At left: Barbara Metteer at her home in Madras.**

Most of the people who could tell us are long gone. As far as we know, all the USO council members, the sewing committee, the cookie bakers, and the senior hostesses—most of them middle aged at the time—have passed away, but a few of the 40 or so junior hostesses are still among us.

We know their names because some are given in the back of Leita Richardson's guest register and others are named in *Pioneer* articles. They are too many to list here in full, but a few names familiar to local history buffs are worth mentioning: Thelma and Marjorie Haberstich, Laurel Gard, Elaine Percival, Marcella Zemke, Helen Marston, Elna Degner, June Hering, Evelyn Kelly,



mostly stayed out of sight in the kitchen.

Barbara said that although she was afraid for our servicemen away at war, the men she met from the airfield did not seem to be apprehensive about the fighting. "They were so young," she said. "That's what they wanted to do. That was their ambition [to be in the Air Force] and they were excited and happy."

According to Barbara, the young men were well-behaved. "They were wonderful," she said. "They were just boys."

Barbara remembers watching the pilots training above the airfield as she walked to school and she also remembers the pilot trainees being at the high school because the military used one or two classrooms for teaching them. "We never seemed to ever meet in the hall much, but I would hear them walk down the hall."

Although Barbara was too shy to interact much with the young men herself, she said, "Several girls my age had Air Force boys for special friends and I would hear them talk about their contacts."

Jackie Bryant Newbill, was less reserved than Barbara. In written recollections provided to her cousin, Jerry Ramsey, Jackie says,

"I very well remember the many dances at the USO in that old building downtown. Sometimes they would have the dances up at the air base and come and get us in a bus. Madeline [Kelly] and I were the youngest of the whole group (14) but I looked much older so don't remember ever missing a dance. What fun all that was. Mom [Bea Ramsey Bryant] Aunt Verl [Verl Ramsey Rice], Lois McKenzie, and Leita Richardson were the official chaperones. I remember Louise [another cousin--Louise Rice, married Verne Campbell] had just started dating Verne and he couldn't deal very well with Louise dancing with those 'Flyboys' as he called them.

Navy guys had no use for anyone who wasn't Navy."

Jackie brings up the point that not all the entertaining of airmen occurred in the community hall. A story in the Oct 19, 1944 *Pioneer* confirms that junior hostesses from Madras, Prineville, and Redmond were invited to the opening of the officers' club at the Madras airfield.

Jackie goes on to describe another popular activity:

"They brought a bus down quite often and a bunch of us would go out to the old Mary Williams ranch [on the way to Metolius] and go horseback riding on her horses. I got bucked off the first day on the oldest horse she had, so that ended my horseback riding."

And, of course, there were a few romances, both wannabe and real. Jackie wrote that two of her friends had crushes on a couple of sergeants, who both turned out to be married and much older than the girls.

According to Jackie, another local woman started seeing a man from the airfield on the sly. When he was transferred to LaGrande, she went with him, leaving her husband behind.

No doubt there were many more juicy stories about the airfield and the USO, but most of the people who could tell them have either moved away or passed away. Unless a new source comes to light, we will probably never hear them.

Readers, if you have any photos or personal memories of Jefferson County during World War II, or about the USO in Madras specifically, that you would like to share, please do so by contacting Jane Ahern at 541-475-3610 or by e-mail at [janeahern@rocketmail.com](mailto:janeahern@rocketmail.com).

The World War II years form a distinct era in Jefferson County's history, as they do

for the rest of the country. By the time the war started, our local farmers and ranchers had been holding on by their fingernails through decades of drought and Depression and things did not get any easier during the war. Not only were people still working hard to get by, they were also asked to give and give and give to the war effort.

Though Jefferson County is a very different place today, some of the elements of the story of the Madras USO are still familiar: officials from the valley promising, but not delivering; neighboring towns poaching our customers, probably with the insinuation that they can provide better services than backwards Madras; and concern among businesspeople that local money will be spent in those neighboring towns instead of here.

But other, more flattering motifs emerge as well, such as our community's willingness to volunteer where needed and the pragmatism and persistence exhibited in getting the job done. May that spirit continue.

On the national level, the USO closed down after World War II, only to start back up again in 1950 to support servicemen in the Korean War. Closer to home, on July 1 of this year, USO Northwest opened a USO center at the Portland airport to give members of the armed forces a place to relax between flights.

And the USO even has a renewed presence in Madras, albeit in a completely different capacity. In February, Annie and Cary Coogan, formerly of Bend, opened a new store on 5th Street at the North Y called the Root Beer Stand Thrift Store. Because the Coogans' son is a career soldier in the Army and has benefitted from the USO himself, they have pledged to give ten percent of their proceeds to the USO.

# A Young Pilot's Last Letters from Madras Air Field in 1944

by Jarold Ramsey

**E**arly in March 1944, a detachment of the 546<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 475<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, 4<sup>th</sup> Air Force, arrived at Madras Army Air Field. Previously, the field had been home base for the 318<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 88<sup>th</sup> Bombing Group, 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Force, training pilots and crews in B-17F "Flying Fortresses." Now, operations had shifted to the 4<sup>th</sup> Air Force, and the newly-arrived pilots and crews of the 546<sup>th</sup> would be getting initial training in Bell P-39Q "Aircobra" fighter planes (an example of which is on display at the Erickson Air Museum at the Madras Airport).

**2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Robert L. Cranston**

Among the 65 pilot-trainees based at Madras was 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Robert L. Cranston, not quite 20 years old, from Green Bay, Wisconsin. Like his flying mates, he had earlier gone through basic, primary, and advanced flight training in Arizona and California, and had "won his wings" shortly before being assigned to the 546<sup>th</sup> and posted to Madras.

The P-39 was in some respects a questionable airplane for the Army Air Force to use for the purpose of transitioning inexperienced pilots like Cranston for eventual combat duty in first-line planes like the P-38 "Lightning," the P-47 "Thunderbolt," and the P-51 "Mustang." By 1944, the Aircobra, though still in production, was *not* first-line, and was consequently available for training purposes stateside; but it was fast, tricky, and somewhat unforgiving, with a radical design: very small and compact, with its big Allison engine located behind the pilot, who sat straddling a long drive-shaft that ran out to the propeller in the plane's distinctive bullet-shaped nose. Used extensive-



**Bell P-39Q "Aircobra" fighter plane  
(Erickson Aircraft Collection)**

ly in the South Pacific early in the War (Culver's "Ace" Rex Barber flew it there before stepping up to the P-38 and his fateful rendezvous with Admiral Yamamoto), by 1944 it had acquired a mixed reputation, notably in terms of widespread reports that in the course of extreme maneuvers it would literally "tumble" end-over-end, apparently because of its short-coupled design and small tail surfaces. Nevertheless, it was available, and in 1944 the Air Force was under considerable pressure to produce as many fighter-pilots as rapidly as it could, and so young trainees like Robert Cranston were assigned to it on bases all over the West—not without numerous accidents, some fatal.

When Cranston came to Madras, he had a total of just 225 hours flying time, in primary, basic, and advanced trainers. He and his mates took turns flying their Airacobras every day, following a strict syllabus of flight plans, learning by increments how to handle a real warplane. But on the afternoon of Thursday, March 23, 1944, Cranston somehow lost control of his ship over the north end of Agency Plains, sending it into a power-dive, which tore off a wing, causing an explosion that blew him out of the plane. He landed, still in his seat, his parachute unopened, near the wreckage of the plane, in a field along Ivy Lane.

As it happened, I was, age 7, a near eyewitness to the crash. My father had picked me up after school (at our little one-room "New Era" school), and we were visiting with a friend, Floyd Evick, on Columbia Drive when the plane went down. We drove to the crash-site and looked it over, before Dad and Floyd went on to the airfield to notify the authorities. For a time, I had nightmares about what I'd seen, and in later years brooded intermittently about the experience, and what I

didn't know—who the pilot was, where he was from, and how and why the crash happened.

But a few years ago, thanks to the random bounty of the Internet, I was able to get hold of the USAAF accident files on the crash, and learned enough from them and other research to write a long essay about Robert Cranston and his fatal crash ("Airacobra: In Memoriam 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Robert L. Cranston," *Northwest Review* 48, 1, 2010, 58-76). I thought I had finally written "closed" on my long obsession with his tragic story—except for one haunting detail, about which I could learn nothing. In reporting the crash on March 30, 1944, the *Madras Pioneer* had noted (without naming Cranston) that, "It is thought that the young lieutenant's fiancée was on her way to Madras and an intended marriage, but arrived one day too late."

Impetuous marriages were frequent during WWII, sometimes with unhappy consequences . . . but this story seemed especially heartbreaking, all the more so because it appeared to be a mystery without key or clue—nothing on record, at least locally, as to the young woman's name, where she was from, what happened to her. Decades later, around Madras nobody had ever heard of her woeful visit: was it just wartime "scuttlebutt," picked up by the *Pioneer*?

But about a year after my essay on Cranston appeared in print (and on the Internet), I received a call—"out of the blue," as

they say—from a man in the Bay Area named Zack Harwell. His mother Vivian, he said, had recently passed away, and in her effects he found a packet of letters and photos recording her brief, ill-fated romance with

Robert Cranston. Harwell said that his mother had never spoken of it to him. He had "googled" Cranston, and found my essay. He was calling to offer to donate his mother's packet to the Jefferson County Historical Society Archives.

The letters were mainly from Cranston (his mother wrote several to Vivian after his death). The earliest is dated August 5, 1943, and the last was posted from Madras on March

22, 1944, the day before he died. Apparently they met sometime in the summer of 1943, in San Francisco, possibly at a U.S.O. function; he probably had a weekend pass from his current training assignment at Salinas Air Base. From the start, his letters are passionate exclamations of love for his "Dear Dugy" (her family name was Duganzich). As he was shifted around from base to base in California and Arizona (Salinas, Sequoia/Visalia, Gardner/Santa Ana, Hamilton/Williams in Arizona, and back to Salinas), he seems to have found ways to visit her frequently, including several times in San Jose, where she was attending San Jose State University, and at least once at her parents' fruit and nut

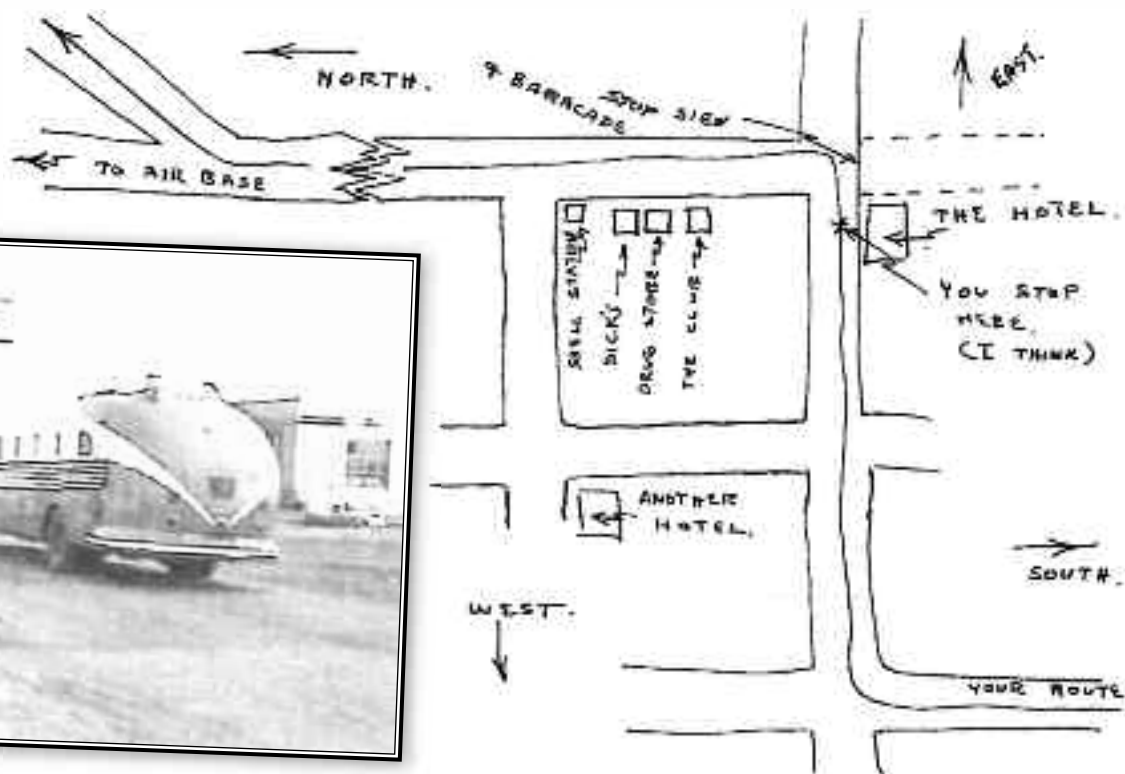


**Vivian Duganzich, 1943**

## THE AGATE



Left to right Robert Cranston and Vivian Duganzich; Grayhound bus entering Madras (northbound); Cranston map of Madras, March 1944.



farm near Mountain View, northwest of San Jose. “True love will find a way.”

By early 1944, Cranston was already writing about their marriage, and at one point expressed his relief that Vivian’s mother had given her consent—and also the anxious hope that his father (a prominent Green Bay attorney) would soon do likewise. Apparently, the plan was for them to be married in California, and live together there as long as they could before Cranston’s next transfer, possibly overseas. But at this point in the young couple’s headlong planning, the iron realities of life in wartime began to catch up with them. First, Robert’s letters to his parents, and specifically to his father about his plans to marry, were lost in the chaos of wartime mail, probably because of his frequent moves from base to base. They finally were delivered to Green Bay in a bundle the same day in mid-March that, in desperation, their son telephoned them with his plan! His

parents were understandably astonished, and concerned, especially because during his brief furlough visit home in early February, he had only mentioned meeting Vivian and liking her—nothing as serious as marriage. As far as they knew, until his call, his only “serious” girlfriend was a young woman from Chicago he had met before enlisting.

The other military disruption of their marriage plans came in very early March in the form of the order for Robert’s unit of pilot-trainees to report to Redmond, Oregon Airfield for training in P-39s. His next letter is from Madras, dated March 18, and it conveys his extreme frustration over the turning of events:

“Ever since our marriage was thrown on the rocks [he means his transfer to Oregon] we have been having trouble, and now you should see where I have ended up. I had to be eager and report to Redmond early Saturday [after a 24-hour bus ride from Salinas],

so what happens to me but that I have to be sent on up north to this hell of a place called Madras. You ought to see the town here. There are only about 430 people in town and is it ever a little jerkwater. Ouch! Remember what you and I agreed on, for you to come up here. Well, where the dickens you would live is beyond me. The base here has only 65 officer trainees so you can gather the size. Accommodations are very poor to say the least. There is only one consolation. No place to spend my money . . .”

In an undated letter a few days later, their prospects still looked bleak. “The base here . . . is a hell hole—38 miles from nowhere—Redmond—and 100 miles from anywhere—Portland—and longer than that from you—which is somewhere. . . . Capt. Wilson, our CO, asked who was married and had their wives here. Two fellows raised their hands, and he said to them, ‘You had better go to town today and see them, for you won’t

see them for the remainder of your stay here . . . ' We fly 7 days a week and have to remain on the base." [Confirming this restriction, the "Guest Register" for the Madras U.S.O. for March 1944 records no visits from Cranston or any of his flying mates from the 546<sup>th</sup>. See article on the Madras U.S.O. in this issue.]

But by March 21, his outlook was brighter. "Guess what I did today. I soloed the P-39. Gosh they are a sweet little ship. When I say little I mean very very tiny, or less. All motor, pilot, and guns . . . " And in the same rush of excitement, he hints (as much as he dares, given military restrictions) about "some very good news"—evidently that by the end of March, his outfit will be transferred to Portland, meaning that she *can* come up, they can get married, post haste, and then she can move with him to Portland. He mentions that his best buddy in the 546<sup>th</sup>, Henry "Hank" Corbin, is planning to marry at Easter—so perhaps Henry's bride and Vivian can share an apartment in Portland while their husbands are stationed there.

Cranston's final letters to Vivian are feverish with plans and expectations, and crammed with logistical details about how she can make the long bus trip up to Madras, via Klamath Falls, where she can stay while in Madras, and so on. He wants her to come either Friday (March 24) or Saturday (March 25), and, knowing that he probably won't be able to leave the base to meet her bus, he draws her a wonderful impromptu map of downtown Madras as it was in 1944, highlighting the Madras Hotel on Main Street, where he has reserved a room for her, and other local establishments she might need to know about, like Dick Doty's Café and the drugstore. (See map on page 12).

His last communication is a telegram, sent from Madras on Wednesday March 22 at 1:12 pm:

"COME TO MADRAS LEAVE FRIDAY OR SATURDAY RESERVATIONS AT NEW MADRAS HOTEL ANSWER AND LET ME KNOW WHEN TO EXPECT YOU I LOVE YOU HAVE SOME VERY GOOD NEWS FOR YOU US WE WILL BE MARRIED VERY SOON AFTER YOU ARRIVE ALL MY LOVE BOB

Around 3:25 pm on the afternoon of Thursday, March 23, 2nd Lt. Robert L. Cranston was killed in the crash of his P-39 Airacobra on Agency Plains, about seven miles north of the airfield. Mercifully (if fate allows for any mercy), Vivian Duganzich had not begun her long bus trip from San Jose to Madras; someone, most likely Henry Corbin, must have telephoned her with the terrible news before she set out. Corbin—who went on with his unit to fly P-38s in combat in Europe—accompanied his friend's body back to Green Bay, Wisconsin, for burial. In 1946, Vivian took flying lessons herself and earned her pilot's license; she eventually married, and her son from a second marriage, Zack Harwell, now owns her parents' farm near Mountain View, California.

After seventy years, we'll probably never know for sure what caused Robert Cranston to lose control of his Airacobra in the course of a short, routine training flight—the official USAAF accident report did not reach a conclusion as to cause. But reading Cranston's impassioned letters to his beloved "Dugy," and considering all that was competing for his attention during his hectic few weeks at Madras Air Field—distress at leaving Califor-

nia and giving up plans to marry her there, fretting about the silence from his parents on his request for permission to marry, then with the news of the impending transfer to Portland trying to cobble together arrangements for her to come to Madras, get married, and somehow set up housekeeping in Portland, and running through it all, seven days a week, coping with the grueling and nerve-racking work of trying to learn to fly a dangerous fighter-plane—considering all this, it's hard to avoid the speculation that his over-loaded and distracted state of mind must have contributed to his crash. In the words of a WWII "Ace," Col. Charles Falletta, who flew the Airacobra extensively in combat, "You had to know what you were doing to handle it, or you would kill yourself." (In Rick Mitchell, *Airacobra Advantage*, p. 85).

Seventy years, and the fields of Agency Plains and, for that matter, the little "jerkwater" town of Madras have changed greatly since Robert Cranston once flew over them. But the sad story of his romance with the beautiful girl from California still tells us something worth knowing about the devotion and resilience of the people who have fought our wars, both in battle and at home. And it also testifies, like so many other stories like it, to the terrible mind-numbing waste of human lives and dreams in time of war. That is why it is so important for Robert Cranston's last letters from Madras, and the U.S.O. Guestbook he never signed, to be preserved in the Historical Society Archives, and likewise for the old WWII hangars at "Madras Army Airfield," where he and his mates once hung out, waiting for their chance to fly, to be faithfully preserved and visited. They are vivid pieces of our history, whose value is both local and national.

# Six Jefferson County Homestead Orchards

by Jarold Ramsey

Historically, the portion of Central Oregon now incorporated in Jefferson County was one of the last areas in the United States to have been settled by homesteaders (1890-1920), and like their forebears dating back to the days of Johnny Appleseed, many of them planted fruit trees as part of “proving up” and gaining title to their homestead claims. Many of them also planted Lombardy poplars for shade and windbreak, so that today, more than a century later, many homestead sites in eastern Jefferson County are hauntingly marked by tall

sentinel poplars. And on many of these sites stand equally ancient apple trees, some of them still bearing fruit after years of total neglect.

These pioneer orchards (typically just a few trees, but occasionally as many as 100) are a living part of our local historical heritage, linking us to the aspirations, know-how, and food preferences of our ancestors on this land. What varieties are there among these gnarly old survivors? (Undoubtedly some of them are now-forgotten “heirloom” varieties like Astrakhan, Sheepsnose, Winter Banana, and so on.) And why—for what reasons of taste and cooking—were they chosen by the settlers? Why did they plant their trees in these particular sites on their homestead properties? Where did they get the tree-starts, or seeds? And how can we now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, protect and



**Omar Cyrus orchard - Joanie Cooper, President of Home Orchard Society, inspects an heirloom “Yellow Transparent” apple tree.**

er these “lost” varieties and the know-how necessary to cultivate them.

The *Manifesto* offers these comments by the well-known nature writer Verlyn Klinkenborg, writing in the *New York Times* for Nov. 9, 2009:

*“Those trees [in abandoned orchards] are an archive of apple diversity, holding out the possibility of preserving apple genotypes that might otherwise have vanished. But this kind of research makes a broader point. If all that nineteenth-century apple diversity reflects different purposes and different needs, it also reflects a taste for differences. So the next apple you buy,*

conserve the homestead orchards of Central Oregon?”

Implicit in these historical questions is a deeper and more urgent question about the conservation of our food resources. In *Forgotten Fruits Manual and Manifesto: APPLES* (edited by Gary Paul Nabhan), it is claimed that over the last half-century, eighty percent of the apple varieties unique to America have essentially vanished from view, along with “a dramatic loss of traditional knowledge about what apples grow best in a particular locality.” *The Forgotten Fruits Manifesto* also emphasizes the crucial importance of “abandoned orchards” as sources for recovering

*think about all of its hundreds and thousands of abandoned cousins. Think of the agricultural biodiversity they represented; think, too, of the diversity of tastes that made them possible. We now live in the world of the generic apple, in large part because our taste buds have gone generic. Cultivating ourselves is the first step toward our re-diversifying the fields and orchards around us."*

So, for all these historical and ecological reasons for inquiry (and for the fun of a grownup treasure hunt over rough ground!), the Jefferson County Historical Society undertook in August 2012 to collaborate with the Home Orchard Society of Portland, in mounting the first Central Oregon "homestead orchard tour." It was a great success, in part because 2012 was a bumper year for local fruit-crops (2014 was another), and at the time of our visit to the old orchards around Gray Butte, the trees were loaded with ripe or ripening apples. We prepared for the Tour itself by scouting out the orchards a week before the tour with our Home Orchard Society guests, Joanie Cooper and Shaun Shepherd of Portland. These enthusiastic and expert "fruit detectives" carefully mapped the old trees, took samples and cuttings for future study and identifications; and on their return for the actual tour, greatly enhanced both our understanding of the lore and life-cycle of fruit trees, and our appreciation of the living historical legacy of our forgotten homestead orchards.

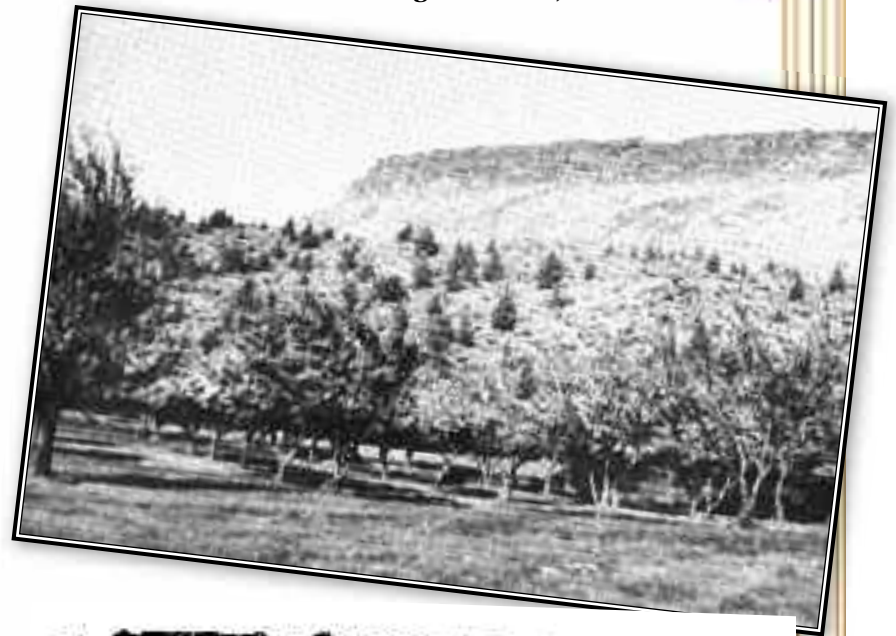
What follows are brief accounts of six of these treasures in Jefferson County:

## The Cove Orchard

(approximately 1745 ft.)

Any account of pioneer orchards in Jefferson County needs to begin with the first one—the once-celebrated "Cove Orchard" deep in Crooked River canyon west of Culver. The original homesteader of the Cove, William Clark Rogers, probably planted some fruit trees soon after he settled there in 1879; his successor, T.F. "Ferd" McCallister, acquired the place in 1888, and established a real orchard there, with apples and peaches, which thrived in the mild "micro-

The Boegli Orchard, The Cove.



**THE COVE ORCHARD**

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Apples, 50c to \$1 a bu.  
Pears, \$1.25 to \$2 a bu.  
Prunes & plums, 4c lb, 75c bx, \$1.75 bu  
Peaches, 5c lb, 85c bx, \$2.25 bu.  
Grapes, 10c lb, \$1.00 a box

William Boegli

Pioneer ad, 1907



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climate” of the canyon bottom. William Boegli (later the first judge of Jefferson County) bought the place in 1905, and developed what became the first sizeable commercial orchard in Central Oregon, with 11 acres of irrigated apples, pears, apricots, peaches (his “Yellow Crawford” variety was highly prized), plums, prunes, and grapes. In its heyday through about 1920, the Cove Orchard supplied markets in Prineville and Bend once or twice a week, hauling the fruit up the arduous grade up Crooked River Canyon; later (in 1940), Boegli sold the Cove to the Oregon State Highway Commission and it became a much loved state park, the site of many picnics and camp-outs, especially for locals, until it was flooded in 1964 by the completion of Round Butte Dam and the creation of Lake Billy Chinook.

It’s historically regrettable that the throngs of fishermen, water-skiers, and pleasure and house boaters who flock to the lake every summer are unaware that 200 feet below the surface, not far from the main bridge, on the west side, the Cove and its neat buildings and trees lie unmarked and forgotten. And in terms of the renewed interest in “heritage” fruit varieties today, it’s too bad that the identities of most of Bill Boegli’s fruit trees are unknown, and now unknowable.

## The Clark Orchard

(about 3600 feet)

**A**cross Blizzard Ridge on the Old Ashwood Road (on east from its intersection with Wilson Creek Road, which leads on to the “new” Ashwood Road), along a grade leading to the southeast edge of the Ridge and the final descent into Ashwood, lies the Clark Place. It is marked nowadays by its

surviving orchard—located where the grade makes a sharp switchback across a gully (on the south side of the road). Jim Clark and his family settled here in the 1890s; he was a descendant of the leaders of the Clark emigrant train of 1851, which was attacked by Indians along the Snake River, with several fatalities. Eventually, the Clark party reached the Deschutes River, and camped at what is now Pioneer Park on Bend’s north side. According to Evada Power in *Jefferson County Reminiscences*, after the Clarks established their Blizzard Ridge ranch, the Clarks “kept travel [took in travelers], and Mrs. Clark’s skill with sour dough became known far and wide. Her biscuits were the kind that melted in the mouth and always kept a hunger for just one more. To late-comers [along Ashwood Road] with their one and two-room cabins, the Clark homestead with its wall-to-wall rag carpet, three bedrooms and hospitable board seemed like an oasis in a desert. Many a weary traveler made it a point to stop at the Clark Place at meal time, finding replenishment of body and spirit. The orchard set out by the Clarks is a well-known spot on the Ashwood Road.”(p.44) Nowadays, all of the Clarks’ buildings are long gone, but their apple and pear trees survive on the south (uphill) side of the road in the switchback, somehow managing to bear fruit every year,

including the ubiquitous Yellow Transparent and Blue Permain apples, and other apple varieties as yet unidentified, and plums, apricots, and pears. Note: the Clark Orchard is on private land, owned by the Fessler family of Madras.

## The McCoin Orchard

(about 3800 feet)

**J**ulius and Sarah Osborn McCoin homesteaded here on the southeast flank of Gray Butte in the spring of 1886, at the head of a gully with a good spring. Julius set up as a freighter between Prineville and The Dalles



**Julius McCoin and his grown children, l. to rt Walter, Ella Mendenhall, Minnie Helfrich, Numa, early 1920s.**

and sometimes Shaniko, driving big 12-horse wagons loaded with wool, meat, hides and other produce going out, and merchandise (notably big barrels of whisky) coming back. According to family tradition, early on he



began returning home with fruit-tree starts (presumably from The Dalles) to plant in the protected gully below his house, until his orchard—apples, pears, plums, etc.—numbered over 100 trees, of which over 70 survive today.

In the winter of 1886, while Julius was off on one of his freight runs, Sarah McCoin died suddenly, leaving three of their children still at home—Minnie (9), Ella (8), and Walter (4). Taking stock of his family's predicament, Julius decided that, with Minnie in charge, his kids had gumption enough to run the ranch during his absences, sometimes for up to two weeks, and in fact he never re-married. As an old lady, Minnie McCoin Helfrich recalled how the summer after their mother died, she and Ella and Walter had to wash up all the moldy jars and lids from the previous year's fruit canning—kid-like, in their mother's absence they had eaten the canned fruit without bothering to wash the containers!

Whether the McCoins actually sold fruit commercially from their big orchard is doubtful; more likely, they simply offered the overflow to their neighbors around Gray Butte, Opal City, Old Culver, Haystack, and Lamonta. When the McCoin property was sold in the early 1930s to the National Grasslands/"Relocation"/Marginal Lands program, the house and buildings were torn down and the orchard abandoned. But in the 1970s two USFS/National Grasslands range specialists in from Prineville, Duane Ecker and Harry Ketrenos, rescued the surviving trees by systematically pruning them and cleaning out brush. Fruit identified so far include Roxbury, Northern Spy, Yellow Transparent, and Astrakhan apples, and some pears and plums in the lower orchard.

Today, the McCoin Orchard is a much-visited scenic spot, and the trail-head for the popular Gray Butte Trail is just south of the McCoin home site in the poplars. Recognizing the growing popularity of and interest in the site, the National Grasslands division of the U.S. Forest Service is currently preparing an application for official recognition of it and the Cyrus homestead sites and orchards in the National Registry of Historic Places. To reach the McCoin orchard, turn off Laurel Lane at the Scales Corral onto Road 500, and follow it, bearing left, about 2 1/2



Cyrus homestead around 1900, site of modern horse-camp.



Enoch Cyrus family, early 1900s.



miles uphill to Road 17. Go right on 17 to the Orchard and Gray Butte Trailhead.

## The Cyrus Horse Camp Orchard

(about 3400 feet)

This very popular campsite and meeting place for riders (administered by the Crooked River National Grasslands in collaboration with local saddle-clubs) is located on the site of the 1882 homestead of Enoch and Mary Cyrus. In 1882, the Gray Butte country was so sparsely settled that Mrs. Cyrus later recalled that for their first seven months on the place, she didn't see another woman! But within a few years, they built a two-story, four-bedroom house here and farmed about 500 acres with their five sons and two daughters. Enoch Cyrus was a very innovative farmer, introducing barbed-wire fences to this part of Central Oregon, pioneering a strain of hard winter wheat (which became known as "Cyrus Wheat"), and innovating new machines for harvesting grain, including a reaper-binder. The Cyruses typically ran 1500-3000 head of sheep, planted huge vegetable gardens, and kept up orchards of apples, crabapples, peaches, and pears. Only apples survive today, including Yellow Transparents and several varieties of red fall apples as yet unidentified.

In 1900, Enoch and Mary left the Gray Butte ranch and became homesteaders again in the Cloverdale area between Redmond and Sisters, where they were able to practice irrigated farming, and they launched a new crop for Central Oregon—seed potatoes. In the heyday of potato farming in Deschutes and Jefferson Counties (1940-1975), the Cyrus spud cellars around Cloverdale were a

prime source of seed potatoes. After his parents moved to Cloverdale, their youngest son, Dean, ran the Gray Butte place (with time out for a few years after 1910 for land-speculating in the boom state of Florida!), and eventually he sold it to the Relocation/Marginal Lands program in 1934.

From Laurel Lane, turn off at "Horse Camp" sign just east of Gray Butte Cemetery (another historic site worth visiting), and follow "Hagman Road" uphill and southeasterly to the Horse Camp. The orchard lies just south and uphill from the Camp.

## The Omer Cyrus Orchard

(about 3400 feet)

Omer, Enoch and Mary's "middle" son, homesteaded here about a half-mile west of his parents' place, in 1900. His house and buildings—torn down in the "re-location" work of the early 30s—were in the grove of trees just west of and below his orchard. A dedicated pioneer photographer, he worked in a studio next to his house until his eyesight deteriorated to the point that he couldn't "tint" photos or use his equipment. Omer's orchard, situated on a north-sloping hillside with no obvious source of water, is remarkably well-preserved, with vigorous small trees bearing copious fruiting of "summer apples" (Yellow Transparents), Jonathans, and, as identified by Shaun Shepherd of the Home Orchard Society, a very rare variety known as "Esteline." There are also Purple Siberian crabapples and a few pears. As in the McCoin Orchard, the survival of the two Cyrus orchards owes much to the timely and expert intervention of Duane Ecker and Harry Ketrenos in the 1970s.

## The Omer Cyrus "Barn Orchard"

(about 3200 feet)

Located below and about one-third of a mile northwest of the main Omer Cyrus orchard, this cluster of old trees was recently "re-discovered" in the course of the preparation of a National Grasslands application to list the McCoin and Cyrus homesteads and orchards as National Historic Sites. Apparently, Omer Cyrus's barn must have overlooked the orchard, which covers roughly eight acres and includes numerous trees, about 30 of which are still living. Most seem to be apples and crabapples; identification of varieties will have to wait until summer and the setting-on of fruit. Unlike the McCoin and main Cyrus orchards, this one is heavily overgrown with brush and junipers.

Interest in Central Oregon's "homestead orchards" like these continues to grow, and the Jefferson County Historical Society will probably offer another orchard tour in the near future. We have also informally projected an "orchard survey" of the area, in collaboration with the Home Orchard Society, and to that end we would welcome from readers reports and suggestions about particular sites—please send to Jarold Ramsey, [ramseyjarold@yahoo.com](mailto:ramseyjarold@yahoo.com), 541-475-5390.

Further reading:

*Pome News*, the quarterly of the Home Orchard Society (PO Box 23092, Tigard, Oregon 97281, <http://www.homeorchardsociety.org>)

Gary Paul Nabhan, *Forgotten Fruits Manual and Manifesto: Apples*, 2010 (<http://www.raftalliance.org>)

Roger Yepsen, *Apples* (Norton, 1994)

Susan Dolan, *Fruitful Legacy: A Historic Context of Orchards in the United States* (U.S. Interior Dept., 2009)

## President's Message



I feel very privileged to have been elected as the new President of the Jefferson County Historical Society. The board has had a much esteemed leader in Jerry Ramsey for the last several years and we are very glad to continue to have him as a board member.

It is with excitement and enthusiasm that I take on this transition at this time. We are entering into a very interesting phase of the Historical Society's growth. We have had huge success with our History Pubs, the revitalized Agate and we are right now restructuring our web site. We hope to add more events to that list in the near future. We are lucky to have such a hard-working and eager board that is willing to try new avenues to promote history in Jefferson County.

Our membership is the backbone of the society. We have many volunteer opportunities for those who wish to partake. So for those who haven't renewed their membership, please do so and for those who have never been members, please take the time to join now. I look forward to a bright year ahead for the JCHS.

Thank you,  
Lottie Holcomb

## ANNUAL DINNER

**Join Us for the 2015  
JCHS Annual Dinner!**

**Saturday, April 11  
Madras Senior Center**

Social Hour - 5 p.m.

Dinner - 6 p.m.

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*Live Music • Historical Exhibits and  
Displays • 2015 Beth Crow Award*

---

*Talk by Gateway native and  
well-known Oregon state administrator  
Marla Rae (Vibbert) Watson*

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## A Painting of Madras — ?



Heaney, Town of Madras

Charles Heaney (1897-1981) was a versatile and widely-acclaimed Northwest painter whose works are on permanent display in the Portland Art Museum and other major galleries and museums. He grew up and lived most of his life in Portland, but in the 1950s went on frequent car-trips into central and eastern Oregon, in the course of which he photographed and sketched small towns and spacious, remote highway vistas. One of his paintings from this series, titled “Town of Madras,” hangs in the Carl Hall Gallery of the Hallie Ford Museum of Art in Salem.

The fact that it doesn’t much *look* like Madras is puzzling, but Heaney’s approach in such works was, in the words of Roger Hull, Professor Emeritus of Art History at Willamette University, “less documentary than poetic and meditative—based on drawings but also on his memory and imagination as a traveler passing through, observing but not settling.” (“Collection Guide,” Carl Hall Gallery, Hallie Ford Museum, 2011)

Another part of the puzzle is that in the studio, Heaney regularly used a collection of small wood-and-cardboard models of buildings—church-

es, stores, dwellings, and so on—placing them in varying combinations to look at as he “reconstructed” the small towns he was painting.

“Artistic license,” as we say (begging nearly every question)—but there *do* seem to be some recognizable elements of Madras in the painting: the Highway 26 grade leading north out of Madras, with the area of light-colored barren “fill” on the uphill side; “Depot Hill” itself, as seen from below; the monumental overpass in the foreground, somehow relocated from its real location at the top of the Highway 26 grade over the railroad tracks—? Maybe Heaney’s “license” led him to reposition the whole town of Madras from “down in the Basin” to where he thought it should be, scenically perched on the top of the hill—? (Others, even Madras natives, have had the same wishful fancy.) Maybe the entire painting is in fact a pictorial *anagram* of Madras? What do you think? Does anybody know of other paintings—realistic, abstract, impressionistic, whatever— of Jefferson County towns and settlements?

*(Permission to use Charles Heaney’s “Town of Madras” in this article was generously given by the Trustees of the Hallie Ford Museum of Art, Salem, Oregon.)*

## Donations to the JCHS Museum Collection and Archives since October 2014

Although the JCHS Museum collection is currently “in storage,” waiting for the re-opening of the Museum, the Historical Society continues to welcome gifts of historically-significant items and archival materials (letters, diaries, records, photos etc.): it’s been because of the generous giving of such artifacts of our history, after all, that the Museum Collection has grown over the years to over 6000 items. Gifts are, because of the JCHS’s non-profit status, tax-deductible.

### Gifts to the collection since October 2014:

- Early 20thc. wedding dress of Julia Dussault, Madras leader and one of the founders of the Historical Society and Museum—given by Sally Perry and Kathleen Bauska
- Wicker mortician’s “transport” coffin, used in early-day Madras, probably by Ed Mason, first County Coroner—given by Gail Scott and Travis and Shawna Williams
- Extensive historical research files of Beth Crow—from the estate of Beth Crow
- Gavel, certificates, photos and other memorabilia from Madras attorney Boyd Overhulse’s term (1957-9) as President of the Oregon Senate—given by Helena Overhulse Bova and family
- Records, maps, clippings, research notes etc. on the history of Crooked River Ranch and its previous existence as the “Gates Ranch”—gift of Constance Albrecht
- Medical items relating to Dr. Evan Thomas’s long medical practice in

Madras (doctor’s “house-call bag,” obstetrical scales, his office sign, medical license, Medical Board certificate, etc.); also historical files on Sahalee Park, and rare printed brochure on the 1910 sale of the entire sheep holdings of Hay Creek Ranch—given by Dorothy Michaels Thomas

- Copies of final application packets for the inclusion of the Julius McCoin and Enoch Cyrus homesteads and orchards on the National Registry of Historic Sites, including extensive historical research findings—given by Janine McFarland, USFS/National Grasslands historian/archaeologist

- Framed historic photos of early Jefferson County people, events, and scenes—given by Dave Bell and the estate of John Wood

- Extensive research files on the “North Hangar” and Madras Army Air Field in WWII, prepared by Michele Quinn for the City of Madras’s application for inclusion of the North Hangar in the National Registry of Historic Buildings—City of Madras (Michele Quinn)

## Memorial Gifts to the JCHS

One way to remember and honor a relative or friend who has passed on—especially someone who has had an interest in local history—is to make a memorial gift in that person’s name to the Jefferson County Historical Society. Often newspaper obituaries will list the JCHS and other organizations and charities to which well-wishers are invited to make contributions in honor of their late relative or friend. The JCHS is a non-profit organization, registered with the IRS, and donations and gifts to it are generally tax-deductible. Families of the deceased are always notified by the Society of contributions made in honor of their loved ones.

### MEMORIAL DONATIONS AND GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY FROM AUGUST TO THE END OF 2014:

#### IN MEMORY OF LELAND SCHAWO

Mary Gleason

#### IN MEMORY OF NORM WEIGAND

James and Kathleen Jasa

Simons Family

Ann Obendorf

Jarold and Dorothy Ramsey

Bicart Family

Bob and Kaye Eberhard

The Samuel S. Johnson Foundation

Mark and Kathleen Thomas

Robert and Olivia MacRostie

Dolores McCaffery

Marie Harris

Gary Harris

Keith and Jean Gregerson

Green Cattle Company

.....

## Two New Books for the Local History Shelf

*Two very different books touching on Jefferson County and Central Oregon history have appeared recently, and should be noticed here for AGATE readers. (Readers: if you know of other recent books with local interest, please let us know about them—or better yet, write short reviews of them for THE AGATE!)*



**JAMES H. AND  
THEONA J.  
HAMBLETON,**  
*Wood, Water, and Grass: Meek  
Cutoff in 1845.* Caldwell: Caxton  
Printers Ltd, 2014

In the last issue of THE AGATE, we reviewed a beautifully-mounted, well-endowed book by Brooks Ragen, *The Meek Cutoff*, on one of Central Oregon's most enduring pioneer episodes, the late-summer 1845 ordeal of a loose caravan of almost 200 Oregon Trail wagons guided by mountain-man

Stephen Meek from Vale through the rough, dry country of modern-day Malheur, Harney, Crook, Jefferson, and Wasco counties to The Dalles.

Our review praised Ragen's book for its ambitious, hi-tech route-finding and its spectacular photos (by former Madras resident Ellen Bishop) and graphics, but criticized it for arbitrarily suspending its investigation of the route of the "Cutoff" wagon train at Cline Falls near Redmond where a part of it supposedly reached the Deschutes River there —this meant, in Ragen's judgment, that the Meek party was no longer "lost." In fact the poor emigrants had to endure nearly three additional weeks of very hard travel through north central Oregon before at last reaching the Columbia River in early October. On the way, over twenty members of

one wagon-group died and were buried on the trail; others were very sick but came through. Nevertheless, for Ragen, they were no longer lost; and his quick summary of their passage over this final segment is both superficial, and inaccurate—he misidentifies Rimrock Springs south of Madras (where four people were buried in unmarked graves) as Sagebrush Springs near Gateway (where six more may have been buried), misnames the valley of Trout Creek as "Hay Creek Valley," and so on.

Against the limits and defects of Ragen's coverage of the Meek Cutoff story, the Hambletons' book—the result of over twenty years of research—stands in sharp and welcome contrast. Supplementing their exhaustive on-the-ground work with scrupulous use of the journals and diaries kept by members

of the Meek party, and bringing nineteenth-century surveys to bear on their route-tracing, they offer a complete itinerary of the Cutoff that is both plausible, and radical. "Radical" because they basically re-write the orthodox version of what happened in 1845, as presented (for example) in Ragen's book.

The Hambletons argue that the illnesses and deaths afflicting the Samuel Parker train in their last weeks were caused not by cholera or typhus, but by cooking with poisonous alkali salts collected en route and used as a replacement for "saleratus," or baking soda. In their view, the main Cutoff route did not strike the Deschutes River either at Bend or Cline Falls; instead, the wagons ultimately came to and crossed the river just above Sherar's Bridge. As for the widely-held view that, because of Stephen

Meek's incompetence and shiftlessness as "wagon-master," the various wagon groups split apart and wandered their separate ways until finally coming together at Rimrock Springs, the authors argue forcefully that, in fact, Meek knew his route and was a capable guide for those who chose to follow him, like Capt. Solomon Tetherow (later one of the first settlers in Central Oregon), and that, in fact, the different trains did *not* split apart for more than a day or two throughout the entire trek from Vale to The Dalles.

Space does not permit examining these conclusions here, but they do seem to be well-founded, often on the basis of new evidence—and it is safe to predict that the Hambletons will in their modest way stir up many Oregon historians who thought they knew the story of Stephen Meek and his notorious 1845 Cutoff!



**D. "BING" BINGHAM,**  
*Shaped By the Land: Stories of the Rural American West As Told in the Dusty Dog Cafe.* McMinnville: Sage Meadows Press, 2014.

The anecdotes and yarns in Bing Bingham's delightful new collection are not "historical," exactly (although they are all based on first-hand tellings by real people), but they vividly convey the dust and grit and good-humored edge on experience that local history comes out

of, but rarely conveys when it is written down.

A photographer and storyteller who ranches with his wife Ann outside of Ashwood, Bingham has a gifted ear and a sympathetic feeling for the stories that rural Central Oregonians tell on each other, and on themselves, typically in generic "Dusty Dog Cafes" in Antelope, Fossil, Maupin, Culver, Moro, Madras (but no longer, alas, in "The Stag" and the "Shangri-la"). Many of these stories involve funny and/or scary interspecies set-tos between ranch-folks and cows, horses, dogs, goats, pigs, packrats, buzzards, and so on. Others lovingly but unsentimentally evoke the hard and unforgiving life of ranching in our neck of the woods—and also the unexpected rewards of it, notably the kindness and support of country neighbors when trouble comes.

In one episode, the writer

and his trusted farm dog touchingly work out between them her growing old and infirm; in another, he follows his doctor's remedy for stress by lying out in the grass and "looking up at the sky and the trees"—only to find that three buzzards have spotted him and are circling expectantly overhead! There is abundant "local color" here, in many hues, and there is also a lot of hard-nosed wisdom. A recommendation for writers of local history: read this book—and try to spend time listening at your local Dusty Dog Café!



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 Historical Society**

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 541-475-5390  
 Website: [www.jeffcohistorical.org](http://www.jeffcohistorical.org)



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JEFFERSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Box 647, Madras, Oregon 97741

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- |                                 |                                  |                                     |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron  | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor |

*(Make check out to JCHS; mail to address at left)*

- Yes, I'm interested in becoming a History Volunteer
- Yes, I would like to make a donation to the JCHS (the Society is a registered non-profit organization; donations and gifts to it are tax-deductible)
- I have artifacts, photos, written material I would like to donate to the JCHS Museum