

Make the acquaintance of the West Coast Lady

BY LINDA KAPPEN

The West Coast Lady (*Vanessa Annabella*) is a butterfly of the Nymphalidae family of butterflies.

The wingspan of this butterfly can be up to two inches. The dorsal view is orange with black markings with an orange bar near the tip of the forewing. The forewing tips are “truncate,” meaning the wingtip is angled with a clipped look rather than rounded. The hindwings have four blue spots outlined in black near the margin area, which is orange and open with very few black markings.



A dorsal view of a West Coast Lady.

The ventral view shows the reverse side of the blue spots in the marginal area of the wing. Soft-colored cream, light brown, dark brown and leaf-like

patterns are displayed in the discal area, which is the middle of the wing.

This species of *Vanessa* uses mallows as the main hostplant, but they will also use hollyhocks, cheeseweed, and

nettles. The eggs are laid singly on hostplant leaves, and the caterpillar makes a silken nest. Individuals of this species overwinter as adult butterflies.

Nectar for the West Coast Lady comes from flowers, such as Douglas aster, goldenrod, marigold, toothwort, spreading dogbane and many others.



A ventral view of a West Coast Lady. Photos: Linda Kappen.

The West Coast Lady can be seen in flight in from Washington to California, from early March through mid-November. There can

be up to three generations produced during this period.

This beautiful butterfly lives in habitats in mountains, foothills, gardens, and meadows, and it can become a resident in coastal areas. It ranges in all of the Pacific Northwest, east to Colorado and New Mexico and south to California and Mexico.

Locally I have enjoyed the presence of this butterfly from the Ashland foothills to Oregon Caves National Monument and the coastal areas and in all areas in between and beyond. Try spending some time observing this beauty if you can keep up with it or find it busy sipping nectar from flowers.

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■ BLACKSMITH

Continued from page 1

and her children during the ‘fever of 1867 to 1869.’” It may have been while he was waiting to get married that Ben lived and worked in Uniontown.



Ben Johnson, who established a blacksmith shop near Ruch in 1868 and 1869. Photo: Courtesy of the Lane County History Museum.

The 1900 Albany census recorded that Ben Johnson could read and write and owned his own home. He died in Albany in 1901 at age 66. Amanda died in 1927 at age 94. They are buried next to each other in the Masonic Cemetery in Albany.

A recent story by Albany historian Hasso Hering states, “His obituary in 1901 said Johnson crossed the plains to southern Oregon with an ox team in 1853, moved to Albany in 1868, married Amanda in 1870 at the home of an Albany family, [and] followed his trade as a blacksmith as long as he was able to work.”

After Ben Johnson left the Applegate Valley the namesake of the mountain became a mystery and for a long time no one knew his last name. The US Geological Survey’s Board on Geographic Names changed the official name of the mountain to Negro Ben Mountain in 1964.

Much of what has been pieced together about Ben’s short time in the Applegate comes from the historical sleuthing of local historian (and my mother-in-law) Jan Wright, who in 2003 figured out Ben’s last name.

“I was researching minority people in Jackson County. I found him on the tax rolls for Uniontown in Jackson County at the University Special collections in Eugene. Because he disappeared from those records, I continued the search in Oregon and noted that ... a blacksmith named Ben Johnson showed up in Albany and that he may have been the one who married a woman named Amanda.”

On October 24, the Oregon Geographic Names Board unanimously voted in favor of changing the mountain’s name to Ben Johnson Mountain, and on November 12, the US Board on Geographic Names officially changed the name.

Zachary Stocks, Executive Director of Oregon Black Pioneers, whose mission is to research, recognize, and commemorate the culture and heritage of African Americans in Oregon, said, “We believe the memory of Ben Johnson is best preserved by having his full name featured in the official place name, without any sort of racial qualification ... Oregonians should acknowledge the dignity of his life and the value of his contributions to the Uniontown community by referring to the mountain



A view of what is now officially known as Ben Johnson Mountain, as seen from Tallowbox Mountain above Ruch. Photo: Suzie Savoie.

by his full, actual name, not by a pejorative term ascribed to him by others or with outdated racial terminology.”

Many people in the Applegate have wanted to see this name change for a long time. Now that we know the story of Ben Johnson, this name change is long overdue. And now that photos of Ben Johnson have emerged from historical archives, we can finally see the face behind Ben Johnson Mountain.

At 4,500 feet, Ben Johnson Mountain towers above Cantrall Buckley Park, in Ruch. It is a highly visible peak that helps highlight the diverse cultural heritage of the Applegate Valley and Oregon as a whole.

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