

NONPROFIT NEWS AND UPDATES

# The Applegater partners with Oregon Digital Newspaper Program

BY MAUREEN FLANAGAN BATTISTELLA

The Applegater will soon be searchable along with millions of pages of Oregon's history in the Oregon Digital Newspaper Program. The board of directors and editorial staff recently approved this significant partnership for Applegater's retrospective issues and new issues as they are published.

Thanks to the foresight of writers and publishers, the Applegater has long been available as PDFs on the Applegater website. This online availability has made it easy for those in the know to search back issues and find articles of interest. The new partnership with the Oregon Digital Newspaper Program brings news, stories and poetry of the Applegate to a broader audience, enables keyword searching of Applegater articles, and retrieves Applegater articles as part of a much larger repository of newspapers.

The University of Oregon began preserving Oregon's history in the 1950s as librarians microfilmed hundreds of newspapers from around the state. With the advent of new technologies and federal funding, in 2009 preservation moved from microfilm to searchable, online platforms focusing on public domain newspapers published from 1860-1922. Today, the Oregon Digital Newspaper Program has more than 1.5 million newspaper pages online, published from 1840-2020, searchable by keyword, newspaper title, and date range. The Oregon Digital Newspaper Program is free to all with no associated cost or membership required to access the collection.

In 2019, local historians, librarians and genealogists formed the Southern Oregon Newspaper Project to work towards increased coverage of Southern Oregon's newspapers in the Oregon Digital Newspaper Program. The Jacksonville Booster Club funded the digitization of early issues of the Jacksonville Times and Jacksonville Sentinel in 2021, work that will be completed and extended thanks to funding from the Dirk Siedliecki and the Friends of Jacksonville's Pioneer Cemetery in 2022. Also in 2022, early issues of the Grants Pass Courier and its predecessor, the Rogue River Courier will be digitized thanks to funding from the Library Services and Technology Act administered through the State Library of Oregon. Travis Moore, publisher of the Grants Pass Courier has agreed to release newspaper issues published from 1923-1945, which are now in queue. Work planned for 2023 includes the Talent News, thanks to funding from the Talent Historical Society, and the Ashland Tidings, thanks to the Rogue Valley Genealogy Society and a private donor.

Historian and preservationist George Kramer has also focused on historical newspapers as a way to mitigate changes brought by architectural renovation and excavation under the requirements of the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. Kramer depends on newspapers as a primary source of information in



The Applegater has now joined other Oregon newspapers in the Oregon Digital Newspaper Program searchable archives at the University of Oregon, including historical southern Oregon publications such as The Ashland Advertiser and The Central Point American.

his work to investigate, document, and describe historic structures and is keenly aware of the importance and relevance of historical newspapers to today's work. Thanks to Kramer's efforts, the Rogue Valley Irrigation District funded the digitization of early issues of the Central Point American, Central Point Herald, and Southern Oregon News. Between 2018 and 2019, the Ashland Family YMCA funded the digitization of several Ashland newspapers, as the YMCA renovated and restored Camp Low Echo as Camp DeBoer, which will open this summer. The Lake of the Woods Girl Scout campsite, constructed between 1946 and 1962, has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 2003. The newspapers digitized thanks to the Ashland Family YMCA include the Ashland Register, Ashland Advertiser, Ashland American, and Southern Oregon Miner, published between 1893 and 1944.

The Applegater and other Oregon historic newspapers can be searched at OregonNews.UOregon.edu, where the Oregon Digital Newspaper Program is hosted at the University of Oregon. For more information on the Southern Oregon Newspaper Project and to contribute to the funding pool, contact Maureen Flanagan Battistella, Southern Oregon University Sociology/Anthropology, at battistem@sou.edu and 541-552-0743.

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# History worth saving

BY LAURA AHEARN

Have you visited McKee Bridge and marveled at how sturdy she is at 104 years of age? Have you taken a peaceful stroll through Logtown Cemetery and wondered about the lives of those buried there 150 years ago? Isn't it remarkable that you can do these things 24/7? There are no locked gates, no "Keep Out—No Trespassing" signs. These experiences are possible only if our community engages, volunteers, donates, and shows support.

For 56 years the Applegate community has rallied to keep beautiful McKee Bridge standing. She is the second oldest covered bridge in Oregon on the National Register of Historic Places and the oldest to stand continually at her original location. The McKee Bridge Preservation Committee started funding work to preserve the bridge in 1965. A major restoration project was conducted in 2014-15, at a cost of more than \$500,000. She's due for an in-depth structural inspection this year; the price tag has jumped from \$6,000 to \$9,000. If this inspection is not performed, the bridge will be closed.

In 2020, McKee Bridge Historical Society (MBHS) received a grant from A Greater Applegate to buy supplies to clean grave markers at Logtown Cemetery. A volunteer spent two days detailing two damaged marble tablets in the middle of the oldest section: Maranda Ann and Phoebe who died in 1873. It looked like the family name was Carey. We couldn't figure out where they fit among early settlers until we realized that the stonemason chiseled "Garey" instead of "Geary," the spelling that appears most often in records. Maranda Ann was the wife of Lewis Geary; Phoebe was their first-born. Their homestead straddled the Applegate River southwest of what we now call Hamilton Road and Highway 238.

But that told us nothing about Maranda's past and lineage. Only recently did we discover that she was the daughter of a freed slave who came to Jackson County in 1853 with the extended Mask-Mathis-Matthews family of former slaves and



Susannah Johnson, left, and Penelope Ellender Mask, were freed slaves and the mother and grandmother of Maranda Ann Johnson Geary, who is buried in the Logtown Cemetery. Photo: Courtesy of Barbara Hegne.

their progeny. This is extremely significant. Very few—if any—African Americans braved the Oregon and Applegate Trails to come to Oregon Territory where they were not legally permitted. The 1843 pre-territorial laws of Oregon Country banned slavery but were amended in 1844 to give slave owners time to "remove" their human property. Freed slaves were ordered to leave, with males given two years to depart; females were allowed three. Blacks who did not exit the territory were subject to lashing. Barbara

Hegne, a descendant and prolific researcher and author, laid out this incredible saga in books available through the county library, and PBS featured the story in the 2015 series Finding Your Roots (actor Ty Burrell, who plays the father in "Modern Family," is also a descendant, born and raised in the Applegate).

MBHS has applied for grants to restore and preserve Maranda Ann's and Phoebe's grave markers, install interpretive panels, and help cover the costs of the upcoming bridge inspection. But grants require matching funds. We need to show that this is important to our community, that Applegaters care about keeping McKee Bridge open and acknowledging the bravery and contributions of Maranda Ann and her family. If these things are important to you, please make a donation or become an MBHS member. Membership is only \$20 per calendar year for your entire household. It's quick and easy to donate and sign up online at mckeebridge.org. You can also visit our booth at the Applegate Evening Market, 5-8 pm on Wednesdays through October at the Electric Gardens Flower Farm, 8035 Highway 238.

Save and celebrate the history of the Applegate!

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Maranda Ann Johnson Geary (1843-1873), pictured with her son James Irwin (1869-1958). Photo: Courtesy of Barbara Hegne.



Donations are needed so the McKee Bridge Historical Society can use grant funds to restore and preserve Logtown Cemetery markers. Photo: Alan Caddell.