The town of Kerby has a long and energetic history. It began in 1855, when James Kerby settled on a Donation Land Claim.

Together with Dr. D.S. Holton, for whom Holton Creek is named, Kerby founded the town, and Dr. Holton's house became the first building in town.

The Josephine County seat was in Kerby from 1857 until 1886, when it was relocated to Grants Pass. Old photographs of Downtown Kerby show two prominent, two-story buildings on the main street, which are still there today. Both were built to house fraternal organizations or lodges in the upper story, and businesses could be found on the ground floors.

The Odd Fellows Lodge constructed its building in 1876, and today that same building is occupied by Kauffman Wood Products showroom, and It's A Burl uses the top story.

The second building, directly north of the first, was built to house the Masonic Lodge. This building was constructed in 1907 and today is occupied by Jerry Work and his furniture shop, the Dovetail Joint.

The Masonic Lodge in Illinois Valley was first organized in 1857 as Western Star Lodge #18. They met in Dr. Holton's barn until 1864 and them moved into a building which since burned down. This was located where the Stoney Front Tavern is today.

Another Masonic Lodge was organized in 1859 at the old mining town of Browntown, located behind Holland Store, and was named Belt Lodge #26. In 1864 the two lodges combined into one, using the name Belt and number 18. By the way, the number is the sequential order in which the lodges are chartered by the Grand Lodge of Oregon.

There are at present approximately 138 Masonic lodges in Oregon, but the last one chartered had the number 226 because of combinations which have occurred throughout the state.

Belt Lodge #18 moved into its third location in 1907, which is the second building still standing in Kerby. Members (Belt Lodge #18) remained there until 1974 when they moved to the present RCC Belt Bldg., the former Kerby School. This building is also occupied by Rogue Community College, where many college classes are held, as well as other community functions.

Present Masonic leaders cannot explain for sure why the name of Belt was used for the lodge. Old records, which would have given an accurate explanation, were burned in the early fire.

However, a little search has turned up a probable explanation. Census records from 1850 and '60 do not show a person named Belt living in Josephine County, but records of Oregon Trail wagon trains show a Belt family arriving in Oregon in 1850.

The father was a physician named Alfred M. Belt. His wife was named Nancy, and they had six children when they arrived. The Belts established their home and medical practice in Salem, where they remained for 25 years.

Belt taught medical classes at Willamette University Medical School and served as surgeon-general during some of the Indian wars of Oregon.

During 1856-'57 he served as the Grand Master of the Grand Masonic Lodge of Oregon. This was just prior to the organization of the Belt Lodge in Browntown.

In a discussion with the Grand Historian of the Grand Lodge, he said there was no positive proof, but in all probability, Belt Lodge was named for Belt. He was born July 23, 1804 in Kentucky and died Aug. 1881 and is buried in Independence, Oregon, between Monmouth and Salem.

He was a great asset to the Masons, the Willamette Valley and the state of Oregon. The Masons and the Belt Building have been a major asset to Illinois Valley.

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Anderson takes oath of office

State Rep. Gordon Anderson (R-Grants Pass) was sworn in on Monday, Jan. 13 as state representative from House District 3, serving Josephine County.

In addition, Anderson has been assigned to two key legislative committees by House Speaker Karen Minnis (R-Wood Village) for the 2003 Legislature. Anderson will serve on the House Judiciary Committee as vice chairman, and on the Human Services Committee.

"It is an honor to be appointed as vice chairman of the House Judiciary Committee," said Anderson. "Both of the committees I've been assigned to will allow me to play a key role in the legislature and to address the needs of the Rogue and Illinois valleys, and all the people of Oregon," said Anderson.

Address: House District 3, 900 Court St. N.E., State Capitol H-490, Salem, OR 97301.Phone (503) 986-1403; e-mail him at rep.gordonanderson@state.or.

Bankruptcies \$150 + court fee

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Oregon unemployment figures for 2002 down from last year

Oregon's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate inched down from 7.1 percent in November to 7.0 percent in December. Since May, Oregon's rate has been just below seven percent.

In December, Oregon's unemployment rate was below last year's figure. Oregon's unemployment rate had risen to 7.8 percent by December 2001. Last month, 121,642 Oregonians were unemployed, a drop of 12,691 unemployed persons from December 2001.

Services employment rose by 200 jobs in December.

Construction employment dropped by only 1600 jobs in December- a time of year when a loss of 3,100 jobs would have been normal. Throughout 2002, construction employment was approximately 8,000 to 10,000 below levels seen during 1997 through 2000.

Government employment, at 275,100 jobs in December, was down 3,200 jobs from the prior month and up 700 jobs from its figure last year. Most of these gains in the past 12 months came in federal government. Meanwhile, local government is down 1,700 jobs during that time.

Manufacturing employment also cut back jobs in December.

With the December retail employment numbers now available, it's clear that retail holiday hiring was subdued in general merchandise stores, apparel stores, furniture stores and misc. retail.

The hiring of temporary workers was well below comparable figures for the prior four years when anywhere between 13,500 and 15,600 additional workers were hired during the final three months of those years.

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ACROSS Betty & Little Boy 1 Lofty range 41 Work unit 10 Western 42 Embarrass 43 Famous Aleutian 1871 opera 44 Snacked 14 Jeweler's 45 Vex 46 Walk like word 15 Use one 48 Pedestal 49 Word with senses 16 Female silver or 17 Regal wear 50 Bits 18 Enthral

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38 Pester

40 Naked

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53 Distribute 54 Nonflowering plant 55 Become angry 56 River in

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chocolate chip bar WEDNESDAY, FEB. 5 Baked ham with pineapple sauce, candied yams, broccoli cuts, multigrain bread and peanut butter cookie

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Hours: Mondays - Saturdays 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. For more information phone (800) 922-1025

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