

The story of southern Oregon’s first gold dredge: by Roger Brandt

Part Three: The Sinking of the Josephine

The “Josephine” was the name of southern Oregon’s first gold mining dredge, that sank after a year or two of operation, mostly the result of neglect while the owners were fighting one another in lawsuits. The following is an attempt to reconstruct what happened using testimonials and evidence compiled in a 750 page trial document with bits and pieces of the story scattered among the pages.

The company that purchased both the gold dredge and the Old Chinese Diggings mining claim in 1899 was called the English-Canadian Company, a corporation organized under the laws of Great Britain. They were able to operate and make purchases in the United States under a separate corporation, the Waldo Gold Dredge Company, a corporation organized under the laws of South Dakota. Under American corporate law, the mining claim needed to be in the name of an American citizen. This is why William Pearson, an American with legal power of attorney for the company, made the purchase with the corporation’s money but put the claim in his name.

In 1899 the company commissioned a man by the name of Windell to recommend a gold dredge to be used at their Waldo mine. Windell claimed to be an authority on dredges but turned out to be a bookkeeper for a produce company who had worked four months on a dredge in British Columbia.

Windell selected a dredge made by the Hammond Manufacturing Company in Portland. The company asked another associate, William Harris, to pay for it out of his personal money with the expectation that he would hold the dredge as a security until money from the company reached him.

Windell supervised the assembly of the dredge but it quickly became apparent that he was completely incompetent in its operation. In early 1900 Windell was fired and George M. Williams was hired.

When Williams arrived, he realized the dredge was not powerful enough nor of adequate construction to work in the boulder and rocky gravel of the Sailor Gulch flats. He recommended alterations to improve its efficiency but before these could be done, Harris asked the company to pay back the personal money

he had spent to purchase the dredge.

In response to Harris’ request, the company made a deal that allowed him to use the dredge for six months and keep all the profits as a way of paying back the debt to him. Surplus money would be his to keep. However, the equipment broke down frequently resulting in long delays for repairs. Harris began losing money needed to pay for parts and repairs. Eventually he returned to the company and demanded payment for the money he invested in the dredge and the cost of repairs.

In late 1900, an investor named Van DeLashmutt from Spokane offered to lease both the dredge and the claim and this may have been what sparked a disagreement between Morshead and Pearson, both board members. In August, 1900, Morshead circumvented corporate

capsized dredge kerby museum.jpg

The bottom of the dredge faces to the left and a lift arm for the bucket-ladder faces to the right. Some of the buckets can be seen lying in law by holding a surprise meeting where he voted to remove Pearson as the corporation’s power of attorney and gave that responsibility to himself.

Morshead returned to Grants Pass and met De Lashmutt in November of 1900 and leased the claim to him for the sum of \$37,925.35 for a period of about ninety days. The money was to be applied toward paying Harris for his share of the dredge. De Lashmutt then sent Harris a bill of sale for the dredge, although this apparently wasn’t part of the deal and Harris apparently didn’t receive a payment.

Morshead then filed a suit in December,

1900 in an apparent attempt to negate various debts including the one to Harris. The outcome of this wasn’t clear but a sheriff’s auction in July 1901, resulted in the “Josephine” being sold to Morshead. There was no mention of De Lashmutt.

In the following year, Harris filed a suit against the company for repayment of money he had spent on behalf of the English-Canadian Company to purchase the dredge plus other expenses. He eventually won but it was noted in the trial that the “Josephine” had capsized and, in this condition, was worthless.

It is not clear what happened to the company and the individuals involved but the dredge lay in the pond undisturbed with all equipment on board to at least 1918. It is uncertain what happened to it after this point.



The bottom of the dredge faces to the left and a lift arm for the bucket-ladder faces to the right. Some of the buckets can be seen lying in the water. The other half of the boat is under water. Kerbyville Museum collection.

Healthy U News: By Lindsey B. Gillette

Ode to Zumba

Oh, Zumba...where have you been all of my life? Or rather, where have I been for all of yours? You and I are not the most obvious couple. Me, I am a little too tall, restrained, double jointed, and unable to coordinate two movements at once. You are smooth, sassy, suave, and shimmery like an exotic dream. For years, I had seen you on TV full of magnetic intrigue. Everyone around you looks so happy, even ecstatic! But it was not here that we met. It was during a demonstration at the local Health Fair. I was shy at first, but there you were with open and encouraging arms. You beckoned me over. I resisted, doubting myself. I didn’t think I could keep up with you. I feared that I would not understand your language. I wasn’t wearing the right clothes. What if I made a fool of myself? A stranger grabbed my hand and brought me closer. Suddenly I was standing there in front of everyone when the music began.

I began to step to the beat. My eyebrows were furled. I was biting my lips and focusing intently on your steps. One, Two, Three, Switch! One, Two, Three, Switch! I was getting it! I was dancing with you, Zumba! As the patterns of our dance began to repeat, I began to feel at ease. A bright and uncontrollable smile spread across my face as I Cha Cha Cha’ed to the right. From our first dance, I was smitten.

I wanted more. I began to drop in to dance with you once or twice a week. You were always there, available, allowing me to go at my own pace. You always kept me on my toes or jumping for joy.

After every meeting I was glowing from head to toe. People would notice my rosy cheeks and lasting grin and wonder what I had been doing. I felt invigorated, clear headed, and ready for any challenge that came my way. And things kept coming my way.

“Life” happened and I became extremely consumed with my

many projects and activities. I fell into a dark place. I did not get to see you as often as I would have liked. I found myself reminiscing and half-heartedly improvising moves. I missed you. I yearned for you. I cursed my obligations. Why couldn’t my only obligation be to you, Zumba?

I realized how much I wanted to be there grapevine-ing, box stepping, and shimmying. So I made a commitment to rearrange my priorities to bring you, Zumba, back into my life for good. I appreciate all that you do for me. You give me confidence, even when we are not together. Your joy is contagious and spreads beyond me to the people around me. You make me a better person. When I am with you, we are the only two on Earth. Oh, Zumba, I love you! (But don’t tell my husband!)

The staff and volunteers of Healthy U (formerly Illinois Valley Counseling and Support) present this column as part of their mission to promote health in the Illinois Valley.



Robin Paulson (left), Kris Ismaili, Connie Hoke and Allison Arnold provided refreshments to the volunteer firefighters during the post office fire May 30.

Southern Oregon Alternative Medicine



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