

Flavels: Most of the photos date to the mid-1890s

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“I don’t even know if it belonged to her ... can I see some of the photographs?”

He snapped a picture of a few pages and rocked my world. There was Nellie, Flavel’s daughter, sitting at the piano in the music room! Here was daughter Katie’s bedroom filled with knickknacks on the mantel! The photograph of the library distinctly showed how the room was decorated!

Out of reach

I indicated that we had seen many of the photos, or had seen similar images, but how many interior photos were there? Of the 140-plus photographs, there were about 15 interiors.

“How much?” I asked with trepidation. The figure was far beyond our means, even for something so coveted and precious. I told him the request was unrealistic and made a much smaller, more reasonable offer.

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A week or so later, I received a call from our friends at the Oregon Historical Society. “Did you know there is a Flavel photo album in South America? We told him the Clatsop County Historical Society would be the only ones interested,” plus his price was unrealistic.

A week or so later, I got another email from the would-be seller, but the price was still high. I held firm to my initial offer and communication ceased. As a nonprofit organization, every dollar is precious and as much as we would have loved to have had the album, it would have been difficult to meet even my offer. I resigned myself to having lost this potential treasure of information.

An unexpected benefactor

More than a year passed and Greg Newenhof of City Lumber purchased the “other” Flavel house, built by the captain’s son at 15th Street and Franklin Avenue. In one of our many conversations about the family, the photo album came up. He was curious enough to offer to fund the purchase, if it was still available. I scoured my old email and contacted the owner of the album. He replied that a deal could still be done.

After a few anxious moments of wiring money across national borders and a week of waiting for the delivery, we were rewarded by the excitement of paging through what could only be Nellie Flavel’s photograph album. Our best guess is that most of the photographs date to the mid-1890s.

We’ve selected a few for your enjoyment.

After a long, strange, circuitous route, the album was home! It just makes you wonder, what other treasures are waiting to come back?

McAndrew Burns is executive director of the Clatsop County Historical Society, which oversees the Flavel House Museum.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

A page from Nellie Flavel’s photograph album shows her handwriting under some of the photos.



Submitted Photo

The Carriage House exterior. Note the seat cushion to the left of the doors. The ornate fence that surrounded three sides of the property went clear to the Carriage House.



Submitted Photo

Delivery man with vegetables. It is interesting to note that the album contains two different photographs of this man.



Submitted Photo

South side of the house, taken before or after some lawn tennis and croquet. Unidentified people.

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From left: Peter Wong, Hillary Borrud, Mateusz Perkowski