

10 Salem Families Celebrated Christmas Here 100 Years Ago

By BEN MAXWELL

Certainly Christmas was honored and celebrated by the 10 families who resided on the site of Salem 100 years ago. But where and how is not a matter of distinct historical record. Back in 1849 the population of about 100 persons occupying 16 buildings had no newspaper to record events of the day, and letters from those times are not explicit about what really did happen on Christmas here ten decades ago.

Emigrants lately arrived were often gaunt with hunger, ill from privations and frequently destitute. Such was Tabitha Brown, a courageous and persistent woman, past 60 years of age, who endured unbelievable hardships and suffering on the plains and in the mountainous region of the Oregon country. When she concluded her long overland journey at the home of a Methodist minister in Salem on Christmas Day of 1849 she had not set foot in a house for nine wearisome months. Her entire wealth consisted of a 6 1/4 cent piece discovered in the finger of an old glove. With this amount she bought needles and undertook sewing. Her determination inspired confidence and her energy founded an orphanage and inspired Pacific University.

Abundance in today's holiday season exceeds the profusion imagined by any pioneer dreamer hovered about his smoky fireplace in 1849. Luxury food for a big celebration had not yet been imported, and gifts for giving were yet scarce and expensive.

An observer who passed this way late in 1848 saw but five men in this tiny community. And they were itching with the gold fever. But infirmities kept them from heading for the California diggings.

Some gold seekers from Salem had early acquired wealth in the mines and returned home to their defenseless families. Those with money quickly exhausted the stock in Salem's only store founded by Uncle Tommy Cox in 1847. In 1848 his business was located in a new, two story structure on the northeast corner of what is now Commercial and Ferry street. A plaque marks the site.

During December of 1848 Uncle Tommy sold butter for 20 cents a pound; sugar, two pounds for a quarter; three-quarters of a yard of silk cost \$1.50; four pounds of coffee cost \$1, and a gallon of molasses sold for six bits.

A year later Cox's day book contains a few entries for the holiday season. A sensible presumption is that those who returned from the gold fields with wealth bought all Uncle Tommy had to sell and there was no merchandise left for Christmas business.

Come December of 1850, and things were different. Salem then had three if not four stores, and merchandise



Christmas Present — Joan Tigerstrand Grunden (above) ex-wife of Jack Grunden, paralyzed patient at Birmingham Veterans' hospital, Van Nuys, Calif., is going to be Jack's Christmas present. Grunden's fellow patients pooled their resources to give Joan a plane trip from Portland, Ore., so that she can be together with her ex-husband—who wants to re-marry her—for the holidays. (Acme Telephoto)

Commercial street drew considerable comment and, says the paper, "gave a distinct shock as though it were a sacrifice." Everything was quiet in Salem on Christmas except at the postoffice. The office remained open and a reporter noted that it was crowded to overflowing as though everyone expected a Christmas present by mail and was on hand to get it. And the scribe continued: "A girl who didn't like to be squeezed had no business there."

Churches were open, too, and well attended. But those who did not care to go to church had another alternative. "Human Hearts," Idyl of the Arkansas Hills, was playing at Reed's Opera house. Patton Brothers, who managed the theater, were offering choice seats in the first balcony for 75 cents and a less ostentatious location in the gallery for two bits.

Stores remained open late on Saturday evening to supply late shoppers on that mild, balmy night. Stores were crowded. That year in December, just as in 1849, gold, this time from Alaska, was dissipating a gloomy depression. "Innumerable private trees," says the Capital Journal, "were set up and loaded with presents, and the camera fiends were in their glory."

On Christmas day things were quiet in Salem. A single wagon load of lumber rumbling down

BETWEEN FRIENDS

Oral Word Strong Enough to Balk Contestants in Court

The Oregon Supreme court Tuesday held valid an oral contract between two LaGrande school teachers who had been devoted to each other for a quarter of a century, even though it was found, upon the death of one of them, that her will was invalid.

The case was heard in Union County by Circuit Judge Homer L. Watts of Umatilla County. Marie Tiggelbeck brought suit for relief in the nature of specific enforcement of an oral contract to "devise and bequeath property in consideration for the performance of personal services by the promisee for the promisor."

The suit was brought against Erma D. Russell, Ruth Russell Cox, Nancy G. Russell and Mary Lynn Russell, relatives of Imogen Elinore Russell, seeking to have certain real and personal properties and moneys comprising Imogen Russell's estate, impressed with a trust in the hands of the defendant in favor of Marie Tiggelbeck. The high court for brevity referred to the deceased by her first name, Imogen and to the plaintiff, Marie Tiggelbeck as Marie.

Imogen died June 4, 1947. She left her estate valued at \$30,000 to Marie. Imogen and Marie were teachers in La Grande public schools. They found "mutual and sisterly love and affection for each other" and according to Marie's suit, neither had any close companionship with her relatives.

From 1924 to 1942, Marie was a roomer and boarder at Imogen's home. Then Marie wanted to resign and seek employment in higher paying war industry. Imogen said she couldn't stand to have Marie leave and, the suit said, Marie agreed to stay.

help you." The supreme court said this constituted the "simple original agreement" and added "we have concluded that the contract was sufficiently proved." The opinion ended with this observation: "The facts in this case, in our opinion were sufficient to entitle the plaintiff to the equitable relief for which she prayed. The decision of the lower court was right."

Have to Get Another Judge

The state supreme court will have to seek still another circuit judge to sit on the local case of 18 high school students who are seeking to wipe out a suspension order of the Salem school board for alleged secret society activities.

Judge David R. Vandenberg of Klamath Falls has indicated

to the attorneys in the suit that he will not try it. He told them that while he has never belonged to a secret society in his life he has no personal objections to students belonging to such organizations and he feels it is up to the parents to regulate the personal activities of the students and not the state. This will be the fourth try to secure a judge to sit on the case. Originally it was thought Judge Earl Latourette of Oregon City would be on the case. But Judge Victor Olliver of Albany was named in his stead and then the plaintiffs asked for another judge and the supreme court asked Judge Vandenberg if he would take the assignment.



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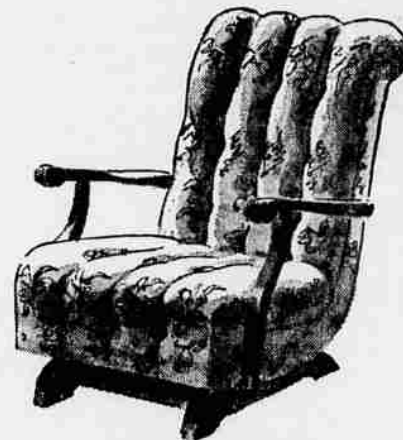
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