



Above: Edith Marian Fedder, Harriet Lindsay's daughter.

Left: Harriet Lindsay

The Mystery of Harriet Lindsay: The story of a Civil War general, an Indian girl and the Reservation at Grand Ronde.

Oregon Historical Society, as "one of the prettiest Indian girls I ever saw... She was graceful as a deer and as slender as a fawn. She loved Sheridan devotedly. Her brother was a fine looking Indian, too. He was named Harney, after an army officer. He was a teamster for the troops. When the Civil War broke out and Sheridan was called east, Frances was almost broken hearted."

Collins was a farming woman who was daughter of a Civil War general killed in the Cayuse war and sister-in-law of a pioneer-era judge. She also described her brother volunteering to fight against Indians in the Yakima [sic] Indian war, and also of her brother scalping an Indian.

A 1973 article in the McMinnville *News-Register*, quoted Tribal Elder Velma (Hudson) Mercier, great niece to Harriet, relating this story: "As a child, Harriet would climb a tree and have a friend chop the tree down. This provided Harriet with a thrilling ride down, even if it was dangerous."

The stories that have circulated over the years indicate that Harriet arrived in Grand Ronde when she was in her early teens — 14 according to one account but a timeline of her life derived from some of the significant dates that are known indicate that she may have been

older, maybe 16 or 17 at the time — and at some point came under the sway of the young second lieutenant at Fort Yamhill, Philip Sheridan, a man who, despite finishing nearly last in his class at West Point, would be a formidable U.S. General in the Civil War. And one who also dedicated himself to destroying Indian culture.

Stories circulate from that time, remembered by Tribal Elder Hubert

also came at a time when girls married young without undue force. "In those days," said Hubert Mercier, "when the girls got to be 13, they married them off."

So, it is into this world that the teenaged Harriet arrived with Martha Jane Sands, her first cousin and also a full-blooded Rogue River. (At the entrance to the casino, the statue of the little girl represents Martha Jane Sands.) They had

area at Fort Hoskins, said Dennis Werth, a local historian.

Werth called the information "snippets." The name used for the female character who might be modeled after Harriet is Frances in these accounts, some written down fifty years after the fact. What little there is that describes this 'Frances' remains consistent with what we know of Harriet's life.

"Whether this is one and the same person, I don't know," said Werth.

Photographs of Harriet at the time show a beautiful young girl, and the three-line tattoo said to be on her chin (it does not appear in existing photographs) is believed to be a marking from the time to protect against her being kidnapped and sold into slavery. One account holds that the prettiest girls were tattooed in childhood.

Ethnographic reports say that "tattoos were a sign of status in some societies," said Werth.

Whatever the history for aboriginal peoples, Harriet found herself in white society and often upper class white society during her life and is reported again and again to have been ashamed of that tattoo.

"She would wear a wool scarf to try to cover it," said Tribal Elder Nadine Mercier McNutt, granddaughter of Hattie Hudson, with whom Harriet came to live in the

"One of prettiest Indian girls I ever saw... graceful as a deer and slender as a fawn."

Mercier, now 93, about the power wielded by U.S. military men on the reservation. "What the soldiers did to the women if they didn't do what they wanted, they just shot them."

Dick Jordan, a Sheridan real estate agent who also is a Civil War historian with a great affinity for Philip Sheridan, said that he had never heard that story.

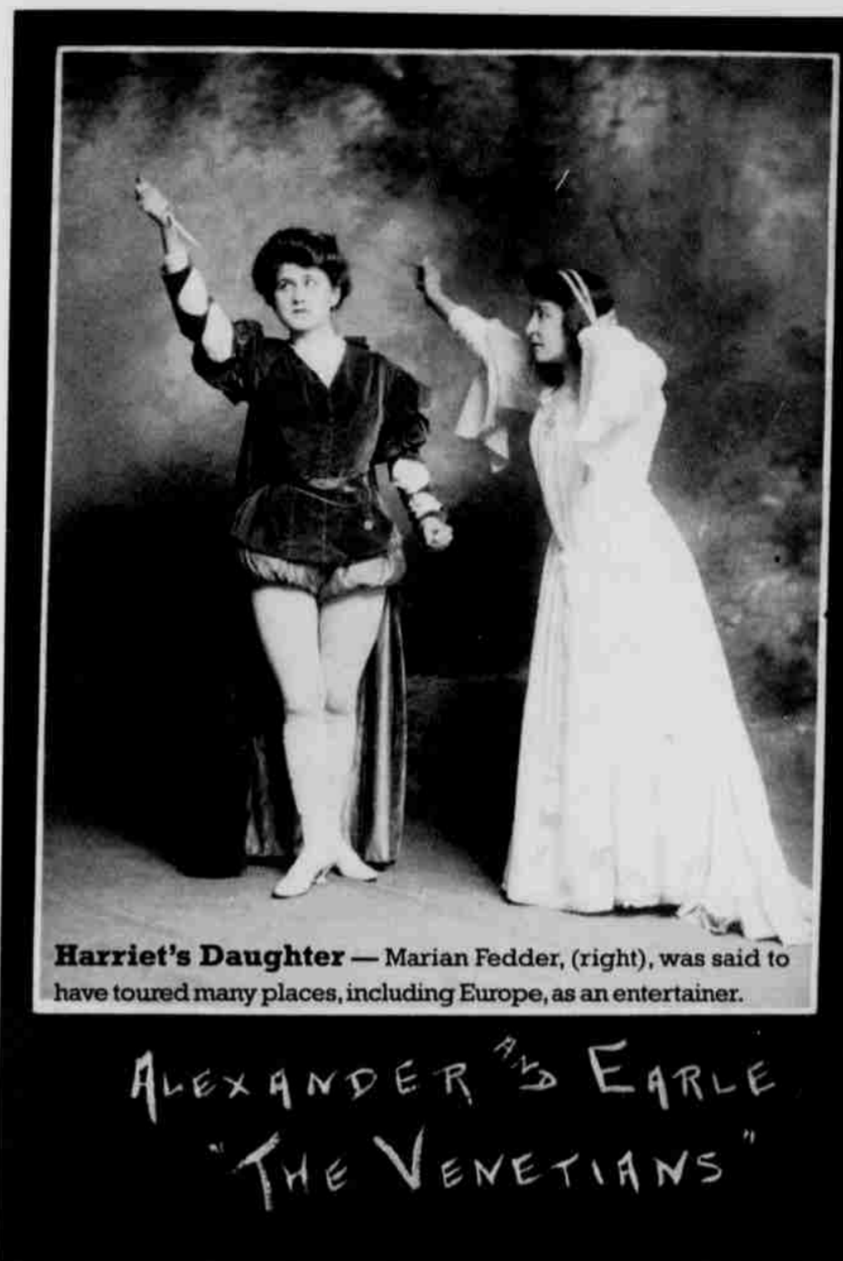
"He could be very hardnosed," said Jordan, "but I've found instances where he could be compassionate."

"From what I heard," said Darrell Mercier, "he'd pick a woman and she'd have to come with him or else."

The story of Harriet and Sheridan

been visiting with friends among the Umpquas when the Rogue River Wars broke out, according to the National Archives materials, and came north with the Umpquas a few months ahead of their own Tribe in the summer of 1856.

It was here that she found herself under the sway of the army's local and ambitious second lieutenant. It was also here, according to some accounts from old pioneer society gatherings, that Harriet may have spent time with the children of pioneer families in Rickreall while Sheridan was at work at Fort Hoskins. He spent as much as a year and a half of his time in this



Harriet's Daughter — Marian Fedder, (right), was said to have toured many places, including Europe, as an entertainer.

ALEXANDER'S EARLE
"THE VENETIANS"

last years of her life.

"She always had that shawl over her chin," said Tribal Elder Dean Mercier, 74, who remembers visiting the house when he was very young.

National Archives source material shows that Harriet lived with Sheridan for about three years.

According to the 1973 *News-Register* story, Harriet's great nieces, Velma (Hudson) Mercier and Eula (Hudson) Petite "believe that Sheridan must have spent considerable time teaching Harriet such things as reading, speech, grammar, social graces and an appreciation of fine things. According to some sources, Harriet developed a reputation for being a gracious hostess."

"Phil Sheridan taught her all she knew," said McNutt.

Dean Mercier remembered from Harriet's final years in Grand Ronde, "the velvet drapes, the plush drapes." He recalled that his aunt Velma (Mercier) said that Harriet "was always dressed up aristocratically."

Tribal member Joyce Ham, whose mother was a Hudson, (and the Hudsons were the closest relatives that Harriet had in the Tribe), recalled from these last years her "beautiful engraved dishes. I can remember the cranberry glass. There's one little picture I had for years that had the date engraved in it. There was a picture of her with curved glass, beautiful frames for wall hanging pictures. Nice things. There used to be a trunk.

And plumes on the hat. Even rings and things. Locketts, cameo things."

In later years, many had a sense that, as McNutt said, "She mingled with high society" and "probably, she didn't want to associate with us."

The early years passed, and when Sheridan was called East to fight the Civil War, some have said that he created a blacksmith business for David Leno, an Indian aide and now one of the patriarchs of the Grand Ronde Leno families. Having provided the blacksmith business for Leno, Sheridan is said to have arranged for Harriet to marry Leno.

"He made a deal with David Leno to marry her," said McNutt.

According to a 1957 *News-Register* story, Sheridan gave the couple a wedding gift of "his household furnishings" that the pair divided when the marriage broke up four or five years later.

While the stark facts of the story speak of a man with power taking advantage of a young, and certainly impressionable Indian girl, "this was not a unique experience," according to historian Dennis Werth. "Did they see it as abuse of power? I don't know," he said.

There is evidence, according to Werth, that Sheridan intended to come back. "He bought land at Gold Creek (between Valley Junction and Willamina), and kept it. When he left, he may have had fantasies of coming back here. He didn't get a wife until quite a bit later."

Sheridan married in 1875, and it

was not until the 1870s, according to Werth, that he came back here and sold the land.

Sometime after the war, Sheridan may have invited Harriet, her brother, Harney, and two other Indians back to Washington, D.C., according to the "Reminiscences of Mrs. Frank Collins, nee Martha Elizabeth Gilliam," as reproduced in *Oregon Historical Quarterly*:

"After the war General Sheridan fixed it up for four of the Indians to come back at government expense and visit the 'Great White Father,' as they call the president. Frances, her brother Harney, and two other Indians went. Frances came and showed me all her clothes. She had a fine outfit for the trip," said the report. Again, as in other pioneer documents cited for this story, the person believed to be Harriet is referred to as 'Frances'.

In the community, Harriet has been tied to two other men, one often referred to as "a Spaniard," and the second, the man who gave her the Lindsey surname. Harriet's daughter, Marian, was known to play an important part in Harriet's life.

Source material from the National Archives confirm that Harriet in fact traveled to the Dalles after leaving David Leno and about a year later married the Spaniard, Ben Corton. The couple had three children, but only Marian survived. Corton died when Marian was about six, about 1883, and two years later, Harriet married Casper Lindsey, specifically cited in the ar-

chives as a "white man of good family." She separated from him about 1898.

Following the end of her marriage to Lindsey, Harriet took a job as an Assistant Cook for the Siletz, according to archives material.

For Tribal members, the years — that stretched from the mid-1860s when she and Leno parted ways to her return to Grand Ronde nearly 70 years later in the early 1930s — represent an era of mystery and romance in which Harriet is thought to have traveled across Europe with her daughter, who was said by various sources to have been an entertainer.

Velma Petite, in the later *News-Register* story, showed a photograph of Marian in what was described as "an elaborate costume, apparently either a singer or a dancer."

The report said that "Marian became part of a troupe of entertainers and for years the troupe toured many places, including Europe, where they gave concerts and performances."

Darrell Mercier remembers Nadine Mercier McNutt, his cousin, saying that "Harriet traveled all over Europe with Marian. Mother (Martha Hudson Mercier) used to talk about her to all the relations."

The concrete memories remaining, however, are of the family's trunks, and the fancy stuff held inside, which Harriet still had when she came to live in Grand Ronde for the last years of her life.

Much of the detail may have been