

## THE HUNT IS ON!



photo by Sam Wright

Over 100 kids gathered at the Easter Bunny's Easter egg hunt on Saturday at Middlefield Oaks. Treats inside eggs were placed all over the assisted living grounds including special golden eggs that could be traded in for a prize.

## OFFBEAT

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marshal, whipped out his heavy Colt Dragoon revolver and pistol-whipped the officer with it ... and the fight was on.

"Instantly the house was in an uproar," Waggoner recalled. "Susie screamed and ran from the stage. Navy Colts leaped from their scabbards and bellowed like the roar of artillery."

A local outlaw named "Cherokee Bob" jumped up and started shooting, picking soldiers off like bowling pins at a shooting gallery. Return fire knocked him off his chair, but it later turned out he'd been wearing armor under his shirt.

"The firing continued from all parts of the room, and a terrible stampede ensued, everyone

but those engaged trying to get out of the house," Waggoner writes. "More than 50 shots were fired, and the room was filled with smoke, out of which pistols blazed, fired at supposed enemies, although several times friends fired upon each other."

Waggoner, unfortunately, gives us no hint of what his role in the fracas was — whether he was among those shooting, or those running for the exits. But he was there in the aftermath, carrying a man shot directly in the breast to a surgeon for a desperate attempt to save his life. The man, who had given himself up for a goner, turned out not to even need the surgeon; a bag of coins in his pocket had turned the bullet away from his vitals, leaving

him with a minor flesh wound.

Others weren't so lucky. However, considering the number of shots fired and the size of the crowd packed into the theater, the death toll was astonishingly light: Just three men died. Dozens more were wounded, however.

In classic gold-field boomtown style, this deadly riot was accepted as just part of life on the frontier; the wounded dressed their injuries as best they could and got back to work, the dead were buried with appropriate ceremony, and everyone else made plans to sit closer to the exits next time Susie took the stage.

"No one was arrested, and the theater went on as usual," Waggoner writes. "But Susie never

seemed quite the same afterward. A slight commotion in the audience would attract her attention in the midst of her best song, and in her best play she always looked as though she was afraid someone was going to shoot."

This sort of shell-shock on Susie's part is certainly understandable. Still, as Waggoner points out, it's not every Vaudeville actress who can honestly say that men have fought and killed and died for the right to hear her sing.

(Sources: Waggoner, George A. *Stories of Old Oregon*. Salem: Statesman, 1905; Bromberg, Erik. "Frontier Humor: Plain and Fancy." *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Sept. 1960)

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An illustration showing a Vaudeville theater scene in around 1899, from Schribner's Magazine, by William J. Glackens. The theater in which a riot broke out over frontier Oregon beauty Susie Robinson was, of course, considerably less refined than this one.

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