

Contributed Photo

The Ward family in 2020. Standing, from left: Jordan Ferguson, Cherie Ward, Alyssa Ferguson, Chloe Ferguson, Craig Ward, Harold Crawford, Kathy Ward, Mark Ward, Lisa Ward, Calli Ward and Morgan Ward. Seated, from left: Alice Ward, Ralph Ward and Matt Ward.

History

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It can also be purchased online at https://store.bookbaby. com/book/ward-ranches-a-history-of-farm-and-family.

Photography

The book is heavy on the photos - a testament to the collection Ralph has gathered over the years.

"I have seven albums I've put together," he said. "We decided we'd do a lot of

pictures," Kathy said.

They also recruited local photographer Lori Rowland to document the 2022 growing season. 'She's great to work with –

she's full of ideas," Kathy said. The book cover features a

Rowland photo of a Ward wheat field with the snowy Elkhorns as the backdrop.

She photographed various stages of the wheat crops and mint, as well as a few of the Ward family's picturesque barns.

Agriculture

The Ward history in Baker Valley starts with Ralph's father, Clyde, who was born in 1895 in Diamondville, Wyoming. They moved to Baker in 1903 to join family already settled in the area.

A framed photograph in Ralph's dining room is a testament to the family's history - it shows Charlie Ward (Ralph's





Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative is keeping its power rates level.

OTEC

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"Like all businesses we've had to deal with higher fuel costs and supply chain issues," Hathaway said.

But OTEC's single biggest expense - buying electricity from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) - has stayed steady.

BPA, the federal agency that sells power produced at dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers, announced in mid November that it is not increasing wholesale power rates.

"This is one of those bountiful years where all the elements and timing came together in such a manner that we can consider staving off inflation for another two years by keeping rates flat for our power and transmission customers," BPA Administrator John Hairston said in a press release.

The agency plans to keep rates level through 2025.

Buying power from BPA accounts for half of OTEC's annual costs, Hathaway said, so changes in BPA's rates typically lead to adjustments in OTEC's rates.

BPA last increased its wholesale rates in 2019, which was also the most recent year that OTEC boosted its rates.

Hathaway said OTEC managers talk frequently with BPA officials, and the agency's announcement that it is keeping its rates level, though expected, was also "welcome news, of course."

OTEC's level rates are in sharp contrast to the cost for natural gas.

Cascade Natural Gas, which serves Baker County, increased its residential rates by 25.1%

which supplies natural gas to parts of Union County, boosted its residential rate by 18.4%.

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Capital credits refunds total \$3 million

OTEC also announced on Wednesday, Nov. "This is one of 30 that its board of directors had apthose bountiful proved the return of years where all \$3 million in capital credits to members. the elements Capital credand timing its are each member-owner's share came together in of OTEC's margins such a manner earned during the year. Each year, after that we can operating expenses consider staving have been paid, the remaining margins off inflation for are returned to the member's capital another two credit account based years by keeping on the amount they were billed during rates flat for previous years. Since our power and OTEC first began retiring capital credtransmission its in 1996, the co-op customers." has returned \$52 million back to its - John Hairston, members and com-**BPA Administrator** munities.

> "As capital credits reflect each member's ownership in the cooperative, it's a great achievement to reach the \$50 million milestone," OTEC's Board of Directors President Wayne Overton said.

"It's important for us to demonstrate to our members what it means to be a cooperative. What better way to demonstrate that than to return capital credits?"

Returns are applied directly to the member's account if the amount is less than \$15. Members with returns greater than \$15 and no past due accounts will receive a check in the mail in mid-December.

Hathaway said OTEC officials were pleased to be able to return capital credits, and announce that power rates are not increasing, during the holiday season.

"These are two important ways we can deliver on our mission to serve our members," he

uncle) on a wagon piled high with sacks of potatoes. The date is 1916.

Ralph and Alice Ward in 2012.

Although Ward Ranches has produced more than 30 different crops in the past century, the book details the main ones: potatoes, hay, wheat, peppermint, corn, sugar beets, grass seed and pea seed.

"You can lose your rump" on potatoes, but make good money, too."

— Ralph Ward

Ralph describes potato harvest as "the dirtiest job." But, even after all these years, he still enjoys eating a potato grown in Baker Valley soil.

"I'm a meat and potatoes guy," he said.

Family and farming

Woven through the story of Ward Ranches are several generations, and Ralph included stories involving his siblings, Alvin and Charlotte, his wife, Alice, his children and their spouses, and his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Ralph's sons, Mark and Craig, now run Ward Ranches, along with the next generation, and photos of family are featured prominently within the pages of the book.

A series of three photographs, spanning 53 years, showcases family members posing with the largest potatoes harvested in 1967, 2001 and 2020.

The Wards have grown potatoes since Clyde's first crop in 1915.

"You can lose your rump on potatoes, but make good money, too," Ralph said.

Advancements have changed agriculture just a bit since that first crop more than 100 years ago.

"I got in on all the hard work before it got mechanized. I don't want to go back," Ralph said with a grin.







Above: A hay crew gathers for a mid-day meal. **Contributed Photo**

Left: A potato truck on Ward Ranches' property near Baker City in 2022. Lori Rowland/Contributed Photo

starting Nov. 1, while Avista,

Director

Continued from A1

Colton, a 2013 Baker High School graduate, replaces Shelly Cutler, who served as chamber director for the past seven years. Cutler resigned Oct. 30 to take a job as marketing and communication specialist for Saint Alphonsus Medical Centers in Baker *"We are very*

City and Ontario. Jerry Peacock, president of the chamber's board of directors, said the board was pleased to hire someone with strong ties to Baker County. and brings a lot of

"We are very excited to have Devon," Peacock said. "She is a local, a Baker High grad. She knows the area and brings a lot of enthusiasm to the position."

Colton said it wasn't daunting to start a new job almost on the eve of a major event because the planning for the parade and tree-lighting had been done.

Colton said she grew up participating in chamber events such as Miners Jubilee.

Her dad, Chris Galiszewski, has been involved in the Baker County Sheriff's Office's Search and Rescue program for many years, and Colton said she rode on many parade floats.

After graduating from BHS, Colton attended Eastern Oregon University in La Grande, where she earned a bachelor of science degree in art.

She moved to Colorado where she had multiple jobs, including helping people with kidney disease find treatment.

"I really enjoyed that," she

said of the job, which she had for about two years.

Colton said she had long been interested in helping set up events, and she worked as an intern for a wedding planner.

She enjoyed the work, so she started her own wedding planning business.

She and her husband, Caleb Colton, who grew up near North Powder, moved back to Eastern Oregon in 2021.

She worked for the Oregon State University Extension Office, helping to plan the Baker County Fair.

"I loved being back in Baker County," she said. "I fell in love with the community I grew up in." Most recently,

Colton worked for Baker Sanitary Service. She

said she'll also continue to do wedding planning occasionally.

Colton said she considered applying for the contract as Baker County's tourism marketing director this spring, but she didn't submit a proposal.

Baker County commissioners hired Jessica Hobson in late May on a two-year contract as marketing director.

When the chamber director job opened, however, Colton said she decided to apply.

"It seemed like a better fit," she said.

Colton said that although she doesn't have extensive experience in tourism, she is eager to learn more about parts of Baker County she isn't familiar with, and meeting business owners who are members of the chamber.

said.

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—Jerry Peacock,

president of the

chamber's board of

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