

# Coquille excitement: smallpox, bank robbery

Coquille had its share of excitement in the early days. Much of it was the kind that most people would prefer to avoid, however.

One of those cases came along in 1892, when David McKeon brought smallpox to Coquille City. In a few days, he died of the dreaded disease, and the community (and the rest of the county) became greatly concerned at having this disease in the area.

Quarantine regulations were imposed. Dr. Tower and Dr. Evans of Marshfield were appointed as a board of health.

Myrtle Point placed guards at the main roads into town, forbidding anyone to enter. The U.S. Mails were stopped.

In spite of the precautions, five or six people came down with the disease but none died, thanks to the diligent care given to them.

And then there was the bank robbery...

Things were going along in a normal fashion at the Coquille branch of the First National Bank one morning in the spring of 1929 (some accounts say December of 1928).

Bess Maury had just gone out the back door with checks to be cleared at the Farmers and Merchants bank. Bank President A. J. Sherwood and cashiers Elliott Hazard and E.D. Webb were going about their regular duties when a shout from Vice President O.C. Sanford rooted them in their tracks.

"Holdup!" He yelled. "There's a robber at the side door. Webb, get the gun."

Sanford had gone to the side door when he saw someone standing outside. The man, an escaped convict from San Quentin, aimed a pistol at Sanford, who held his hands over his face and retreated into a corner of the lobby, shouting to alert the rest of the force.

Webb grabbed the rifle and took a shot at the bandit. The robber returned fire, breaking the front plate glass window and spraying slivers of glass over Stanford's hands and body. The would-be robber leapt into a car driven by a confederate, also a San Quentin escapee, and they raced away up Second Street in a hail of bullets fired by Russ Morgan, who was walking up the street. A partner in the law firm of Beg and Morgan, he habitually was armed with a pistol. His intent was better than his aim, though, and the bandits escaped unharmed.

The car soon swung back into view after spinning around the block while the robbers looked for an escape route. They fled up a street



First National Bank, at the corner of Central and First, was the target of an attempted bank robbery in 1928.

past the courthouse, where the sheriff's deputies had heard of the robbery attempt. A number of deputies gave chase.

A posse was quickly formed, headed by Bert Gould. They grabbed rifles and ammunition from the Oerding Brothers' hardware store and set out in pursuit of the fleeing pair.

The convicts were unfamiliar with the town and headed up the hill toward Shelley Road. When the street reached a dead end, they abandoned the car and ran into the thick woods, where the posse found them.

Crouched behind trees, they pointed their guns at the posse, which turned out to be a mistake. Gould was reputed one of the best shots in the state and proved the point by letting off one shot, which struck and killed one of the men. The other came out of the trees with his hands in the air, thoroughly intimidated.

For some time the city sweated through tense backwash caused by relatives of the dead man, an Indian. They came to town and were reported ready to lift a few scalps in retribution.

Miss Maury said when she got back to the bank she was shaken by her near miss. "Other banks kept calling to see how much money we lost and before it was over I was pretty nervous."

Em Pierce, Bess's sister, was employed at the office of Jess Barton, next door to the bank and remembered the holdup vividly. "When the guns started going off it sounded like the whole army was shooting in the street," she said. "Mr. Barton ran into the back room for his rifle, yelling that there was a bank holdup. But when he came out again, he forgot to turn the gun around and got stuck in the door. Before he got out on the street, the holdup men were gone."

A Ford parked along the street was riddled with bullets. The owner threatened to sue the county or someone, but he could not find proof of who shot his car.

Miss Helen Samson, a county nurse, saw the bandits go by as she pulled out of a service station. She trailed them and was on hand to give first-aid to the slightly wounded bandit who surrendered.

## Marino's BOOTS & SADDLES

191 E. Main Street in Coquille, 396-5915

Bill Marino started working leather in Bandon in 1970. Five years later, he enrolled in Leathercraft Technology at Portland C.C., first learning shoe repair and later saddlemaking. During his studies, Bill met his wife, Kay, who was also in the Shoe Repair course. They moved here in 1977, opening Coquille Valley Shoe Repair & Saddle Shop at 70 E. 2nd St. Their daughter, Amy, was born the next year. Many remember her playing in her 45 square foot playpen.

She graduated from the U. of O. in Architecture this spring. In 1981 their son Jesse was born, joining Amy at the shop. he has graduated from Chemeketa C.C. in Fire Science and is finishing his Paramedic degree.

At first saddles were worked on at home. The shop was expanded so saddlemaking was brought downtown

and boot retail was begun. In 1990, a real change was made when they moved their shop and residence to the Sanford House at the corner of Baxter

### MERCHANDISE

WESTERN BOOTS  
WORK BOOTS  
SMOKE JUMPERS  
CAULKS  
SHOE ACCESSORIES  
SADDLES  
TACK, RODEO GEAR  
BELTS, WATCH BANDS  
WALLETS  
PURSES, BACKPACKS  
AND MORE...

### SERVICES

CUSTOM WORK:  
SADDLE MAKING  
CHAPS, KNIFE SHEATHS  
TACK, SADDLE BAGS  
AND MORE...

REBUILDING & REPAIR:  
SADDLES, TACK & SHOES  
BIRKENSTOCK RESOLING  
FULL SOLES ON WESTERN BOOTS  
CAULKED BOOT SOLES  
AND MORE...

and Main, behind Safeway. The business name was shortened to Marino's Boots & Saddles. Marino's expanded its retail lines of boots, saddles and tack to many manufacturers.

Bill continues his high standard of craft with all types of repair and custom work. Resoling, from shoes to caulked boots; custom work, from sheaths to saddles; or rebuilding saddles and tack, Bill has the equipment and the knowledge to do your job.

Bill and Kay would like to thank the people of Coos County and beyond for their business over the past 25 years. We look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones!