

The Peterson Tool Collection finds a home with museum

BY ROBERT JUMP

The Leland "Lee" Peterson Tool Collection, currently on display at the Coquille Valley Historical Museum, is turning out to be a two fold boon for the museum.

Not only are people flocking to look at the collection, but upon seeing it, many folks have donated items to be displayed.

Peterson had been gathering the collection for about 30 years when at the age of 90 he put the collection up for sale in 1989. At that time, the collection was valued at \$15,000. According to Patty Strain, who at the time was city manager for Coquille and is currently a member of the Coquille Historical Society; the city, with help from the Port of Bandon, paid about \$7,500 for the more than 1,000 pieces.

"I don't exactly remember how it came about," Strain told The Sentinel. "Lee Peterson was retiring from his farm and he wanted to sell it."

According to Strain, she and Nancy Haugland spent quite sometime at the ranch with Peterson as he explained what each piece was and the two ladies tagged them and placed them into boxes.

"We were going to have it in the old railroad depot (where Caboose Lady Coffee is currently). The depot was sound and we were going to renovate it and put the tools in there," Strain said.

Strain retired from the city manger's position and everything was put on hold with the tools being stored in the basement of the community

building. The depot was eventually burned leaving no lace for the tools to go.

"They stayed in the basement of the community building for a long time," Strain said.

After 16 years, the Coquille Valley Historical Museum got its start and the tools are now on display there.

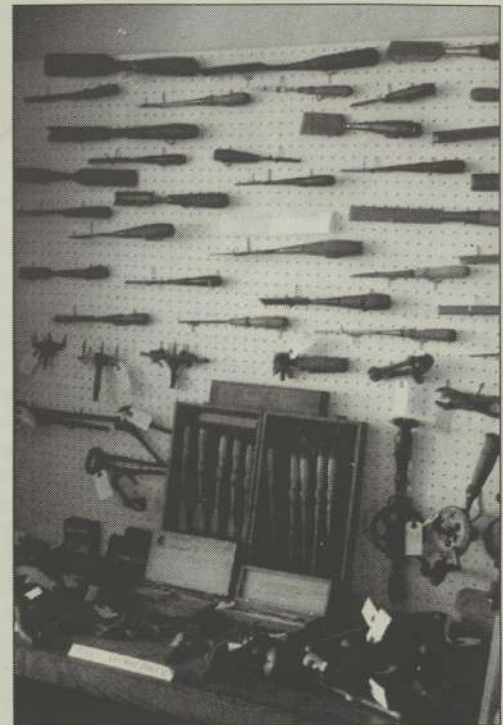
At the time the tools were inventoried with Peterson, a homemade video tape was made. The tape is available for viewing at the museum and shows Peterson explaining many of the specialized planes he collected over the years. Many of the pieces in the collection are more than 200-years-old.

According to Historian Boyd Stone, Peterson was born on a homestead near Garabaldi. Peterson and his family moved to California while he was still very young and stayed there for the next 20 years.


Peterson worked as a cowboy while in California on a large cattle ranch. During that time, a master carpenter died and his tools were left scattered about. Peterson was about to secure two wooden planes marking the beginning of his tool collection.

Peterson returned to Coquille in 1927 and took work building a large barn, which began a career for him as a carpenter. Peterson, a member of and did all of the finish carpentry work at the Coquille Methodist Church in 1928. Peterson worked as a foreman in the building trades for ten years until receiving a job offer from the

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If it had anything to do with woodworking Lee Peterson probably owned one. The Peterson Tool Collection features a myriad of tools. Wooden planes seemed to have held a special interest for Peterson who worked in the area as a carpenter for many years. PHOTO-Robert Jump

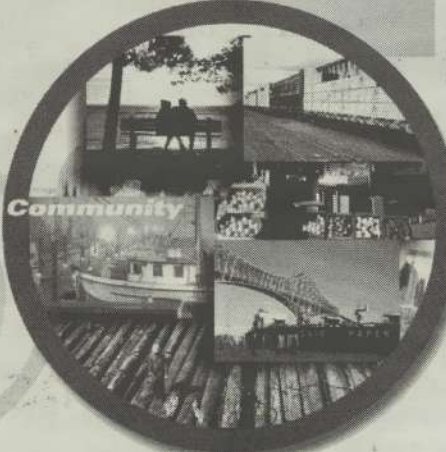


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