

Continued from previous page

That broader effort led to his first book, 2009's highly successful "Massacred for Gold: The Chinese in Hells Canyon," which has seen multiple printings and still sells well, he said.

It was his own family that led him on the path to writing "Breaking Chains," his second book, published in 2013.

"I heard from my family that an ancestor had brought a slave to Oregon, and I had not known that story previously," Nokes said. Prior to the Civil War, there may have been as many as 100 slaves brought to Oregon, though the number was more likely around 65. Some 35 slaves' names are included in the index of "Breaking Chains," and Nokes has learned of another 20 since publication.

"The fact that there were slaves in Oregon at all, I found rather shocking, frankly, and wanted to know that story," he said. "The fact that one of my ancestors had brought a slave made it somewhat of a personal story."

The slave's name was Reuben Shipley. Often slaves were brought along to Oregon Country on an agreement that they would be freed if they committed to helping their owner get settled.

"That was the case with Reuben Shipley," Nokes said. "He was eventually freed."

"I found out about that soon after coming back to Oregon, and so I needed to find out about that. So that led me into the whole story of Oregon slavery. And in the course of doing that, I came across the exclusion laws."

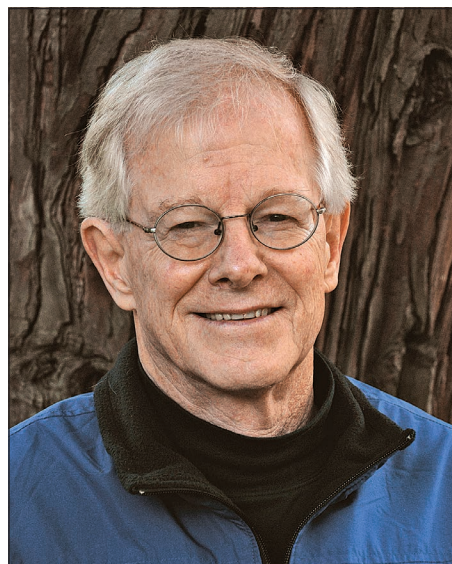
The second law, passed in 1849, intended to prevent Blacks from coming to or residing in Oregon, and at least one person was forced out of state under it.

The best known of the laws was likely the third one, Nokes said, a clause written into the Bill of Rights of the state constitution.

"Delegates to Oregon's constitutional convention submitted an exclusion clause to voters on Nov. 7, 1857, along with a proposal to legalize slavery," he wrote in the Oregon Encyclopedia, a project of the Oregon Historical Society. "Voters disapproved of slavery by a wide margin, ensuring that Oregon would be a free state, and approved the exclusion clause by a wide margin. Incorporated into the Bill of Rights, the clause prohibited Blacks from being in the state, owning property, and making contracts. Oregon thus became the only free state admitted to the Union with an exclusion clause in its constitution."

Fortunately, the clause was never enforced, Nokes said, but it still had a chilling effect on Blacks coming to Oregon.

"It was well known that Blacks were not



When people learn about this chapter of Oregon's history, "Blacks are not surprised. They know more of Oregon's racial history. Whites, we tend to not want to think about the unhappy things that happened early in our history. We kind of forget what we did to the Native Americans. We kind of forget what we did to Blacks."

— R. Gregory Nokes, "Breaking Chains" author

welcome in Oregon," Nokes said. "And so Blacks considering emigrating out of the South, or wherever they were, this would be known to them."

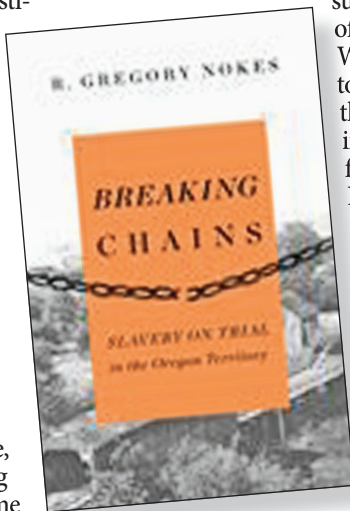
When people learn about this chapter of Oregon's history, Nokes said, "Blacks are not surprised. They know more of Oregon's racial history. Whites, we tend to not want to think about the unhappy things that happened early in our history. We kind of forget what we did to the Native Americans. We kind of forget what we did to Blacks."

Nokes said it was a shock when he learned he had an ancestor who brought a slave to Oregon.

"But keep in mind, I am a journalist, and it takes a lot to shock us. Reporters are learning things all the time that normally

we wouldn't imagine could happen," he said. "It did make me want to write this story. It was that spark, which said, 'I've got to find out about this. What happened? Who were these people?'"

■ David Jasper: 541-383-0349, djasper@bendbulletin.com

**arts note****Sunriver Art Fair now accepting submissions**

Organizers of the Sunriver Art Fair are planning for the return of the live event, planned for Aug. 13 to 15 in the Village at Sunriver.

March 15 is the last date for artists to apply for both the fair and a new online component on eventny.com, which will allow the artists to set up a virtual store to promote their art and continue sales through Sept. 26. If COVID restrictions prevent the in-person event from happening, the online fair option will still be available.

Both events are juried, and applications can be submitted at zapplication.com.

For more information, contact: sunriverartfair.com or facebook.com/SunriverArtFair.

David Jasper, *The Bulletin*



Shoppers take in the 2016 Sunriver Art Fair, which is slated to return live in August.

Submitted

Our **online resources** can help you start a fun DIY project, learn a new language, or find a job.

We have the latest eBooks, magazines, movies, and music to download. Or place your favorite books on hold and pick them up through our curbside service. We're here to help.

WE'RE HERE FOR YOU

We're your **community resource.**
deschuteslibrary.org

DESCHUTES PUBLIC LIBRARY