



Passed away: Columbus Sewell's obituary

Time is laying a heavy hand on the Argonauts of the West.

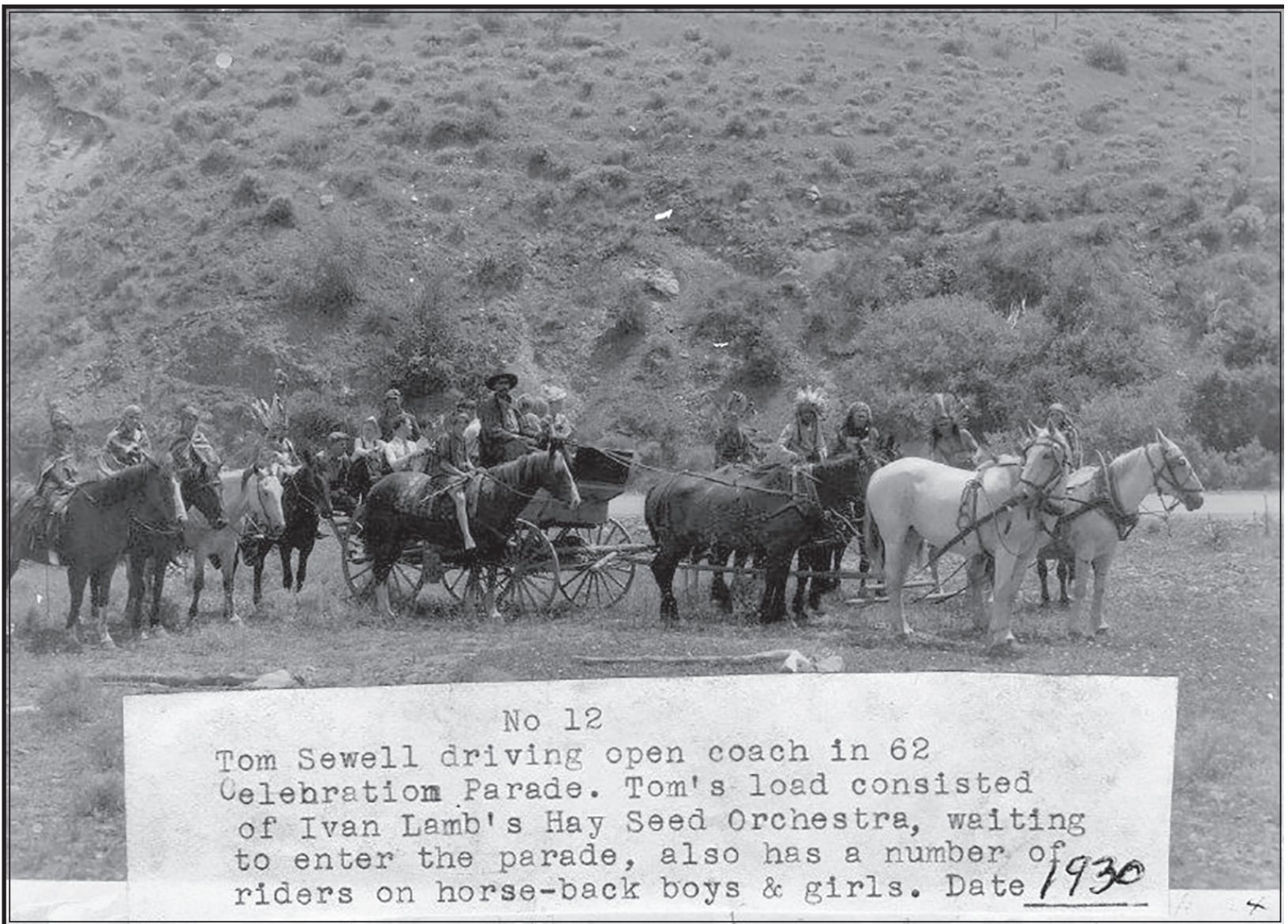
Almost each passing day chronicles the demise of some pioneer of this Pacific Empire. It 's the passing away of a peculiar type of American manhood such as the West Hemisphere will never know again.

Moved by these impulses characteristic of the American, the pioneer of the Pacific, undaunted by the dangers and hardships that beset their pathway, inured to privation and only measuring the vicissitudes of their venture by their own ability to overcome obstacles; they bid adieu to the quiet surroundings of an Eastern home to identify themselves with the unfolding of the unknown possibilities of the land toward the setting of the sun.

Columbus Sewell, though a descendant of Ham, through his affiliation with his lighter skinned brother became imbued with the progressive ideas that moved the white man, and through his whole career in life never deviated from these principles inculcated in his boyish mind.

He served during the Black Hawk War under General Scott, and when the discovery of gold in California was heralded to the world, he came westward and since the early fifties has more or less been identified with the mining industry.

In 1862 or '63 Mr. Sewell came to Canyon City and in connection with others operated a claim a few miles above the town of Canyon City. Mr. Sewell's career as a resident in this community is above reproach. Every act of his life was based upon the moral law and in no instance was he ever accused of unfairness (or) unjust dealings. Not a stigma rests upon his good name and he has passed to his eternal home honored by all who knew him. Born in 1820 he passed through the stirring scenes that tried the great Western Republic and just as the dial of time approached the coming of another century, the good old man passed to infinitude.



Tom Sewell drives a coach in the 1930 '62 Days Parade.

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— Columbus Sewell's obituary

Sewell

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Some of Sewell's other exploits are recorded in a fore-runner to the Blue Mountain Eagle, the Grant County News. Among them are stories from 1879 to 1891 that record Sewell's journey from Washington Territory, freight hauls to Baker and Heppner and even the work Sewell and his son Tom did in "removing Judge Dustin's farm residence from one spot on earth to another."

Sewell married a Virginia woman named Louisa, who was over 20 years his junior. Louisa and Columbus Sewell had three children, with sons Tom and Joseph surviving into adulthood. Both of the Sewell sons went on to make names for themselves in their own rights.

Louisa Sewell passed in February of 1893 and was remembered for the ice cream she made and for entertaining her neighbors with a croquet court she

built opposite her home.

Joseph Sewell was born on April 11, 1878, and was known as an excellent athlete and pugilist in his time. "A Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788-1940" by Elizabeth McLagan describes Joseph as "an attractive rogue and an excellent horseman and athlete, addicted to the wild and woolly aspects of frontier life, where drinking, racing and fighting were daily events."

The work also describes Joseph as the best fighter in the area for a time when he was a child, noting that he took on all challengers. Joseph met his unfortunate end on May 10, 1898, less than a month after his 20th birthday, although accounts differ on exactly what caused his demise. Apparently, it was either due to a shooting incident in Baker or a brawl in a Pendleton brothel.

Tom Sewell was born on June 4, 1869, and got into the freight business like his father. Tom wound up becoming a well-re-

spected and well-liked member of the community.

At one point, Tom was incarcerated at the Oregon State Penitentiary for the crime of selling alcohol to a Native American during the Prohibition era. A petition for leniency was circulated throughout Canyon City and signed by most of the men in town.

A rebuttal was written by Grant County Judge J.H. Allen to the federal judge presiding over Tom Sewell's case, urging that he be punished severely. The rebuttal appears to have been successful as Tom was not granted leniency and served the full term of his sentence.

Tom was married twice, first to a woman named Cora on Nov. 2, 1899. Following Cora's death on Nov. 2, 1919, Tom relocated to Portland and met a woman there whom he later married.

Tom's second wife's name is lost to history, but it is known that she remained in Portland while Tom returned to Grant

County with a housekeeper named Julie Jackson following the marriage. In 1943, following the death of Jackson, Tom returned to Portland, where he sustained a head injury.

Tom would succumb to that injury, passing away a few days later. Following his death, Tom's wife brought his body back to Grant County to be buried in the Canyon City Cemetery along with the rest of his family.

Columbus Sewell passed away on Jan. 17, 1889, in Canyon City, according to an obituary published in The Oregonian on Jan. 23, 1899. An obituary compiled by Laura Reglar described Sewell's career as a resident in the community as above reproach.

"Every act of his life was based upon moral law and in no instance was he ever accused of unfairness (or) unjust dealings," the obituary read. "Not a stigma rests upon his good name and he has passed to his eternal home honored by all who knew him."

Louisa Sewell

Columbus Sewell married a woman named Louisa. More than 20 years younger than her husband, she bore three children, two of whom — sons Tom and Joe — survived into adulthood.

Louisa was born on March 15, 1842, in Virginia. She was fond of croquet and even had a croquet court constructed opposite her residence to entertain her houseguests.

Louisa was also well known for the ice cream she made and sold to residents of Canyon City and Grant County. Louisa passed away on Feb. 7, 1893, with many of the town's women coming to see her shortly before and after her death.

Louisa Sewell in the news

Mrs. Sewell has had a large arbor, with tables and seats, erected opposite her residence, and where she will be happy to serve all with delicious ice cream and cake who may favor her with a call on the Fourth of July. She is also having a beautiful croquet ground laid off, where all who appreciate this popular game may indulge to their heart's content.

The Grant County News, Canyon City, Or., Thurs. July 3, 1884

Mrs. C. Sewell, at the lower end of Canyon City, has excellent ice cream at all times during the hot weather.

The Grant County News, Canyon City, Or., Thurs., June 2, 1887, Vol. IX, #10, pg 3, col. 2, para 14

I can see.....and the only colored boy, Tom Sewell, whose mother used to make and sell wonderful ice cream.

Oregon Inn-Side News, Phil Met-schan, Jr., Portland, Or., April-May-June, 1948, Vol 1, #42 p. 7



Louisa Sewell holding a baby, possibly her son Thomas Grant Sewell.

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