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GRANT COUNTY

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Part of Life In Grant County

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Gambler Displays Finger Dexterity

He was known to all the Canyon City boys and girls as "Old Brigham" and many never knew him by any other name. He was also one of the stranded Argonauts. F.C. Sels used to tell that Brigham liked to gamble in the early 1860s. When playing in the poker games, he had a habit of flipping a chip with his little finger into his pile of chips. This

was done when the chips were scattered over the table and some gambler had won a large "pot."

In those days, the Spanish influence was strong in Canyon City, and everybody had a dagger, including Phil Metschan, Sr. A gambler playing with Brigham noticed his dexterity with his little finger, reached out with his dagger when Brigham

with his little finger tried to snatch a bean, stabbed at the finger and left it laying there on the poker table. People who knew Brigham in the 1880s believed the story as he was then minus the little finger on his right hand.

Brigham lived in a cabin on the east side of Canyon creek. About 1884, when Phil Metschan, Sr.,

was county judge, he appointed Brigham as janitor of the new court house. It was there on Sunday afternoons that Brigham could be seen, sitting on his front porch, sunning himself. He was a very old man then. One day the Rev. Mr. Eads, pioneer Methodist minister, when passing Brigham's house, said, "Brother Brigham, you have

reached the afternoon of life. Don't you think it would be wise to prepare for the hereafter and mend your ways?"

In reply, Brigham said, "I would rather do what I am doing, and have a good time with the boys, and go to Hell with them, rather than go to Heaven with a lot of _____ like you."

Whiskey Gulchers Sponsor Gala Centennial Program

Three words, "a decided success," best describe the Canyon City centennial celebration ceremony held Friday and Saturday in commemoration of the discovery of gold in 1862. Sponsored by the Whiskey Gulch gang of Canyon City and the Grant County Pioneer association, the event drew hundreds of people from Grant county and outside areas. The program was fast moving with no serious "hitches" and it met with the approval of the centennial visitors.

Following are a few centennial highlights gleaned by a representative of this newspaper:

Noticeable throughout the two days was the royal manner in which Queen Mary Grace Cozad reigned as queen of the Grant County pioneers and the Canyon City centennial. An Oregon pioneer, she rightfully and graciously wore the crown as queen of the two-day event.

Grant county people and those from out-of-county points described the parade as "one of the best" ever staged in Oregon. Well arranged and well organized, the parade depicted early days in Canyon City — Indians, covered wagons, miners and pioneers.

One of the highlights of the celebration was the buckaroo breakfast Friday morning at the fire hall



The Whiskey Gulch Gang can-can girls perform their high-kick dance routine Saturday, June 11, 2022, during the '62 Days Parade, which commemorates the discovery of gold in Canyon City in 1862. The 1962 centennial celebration was marked by the Blue Mountain Eagle with a special edition, excerpts of which appear on this page.

in Canyon City. Preparation and serving of food to the large crowd was a smooth operation, carefully handled by the workers under the able supervision of L.M. "Buck"

and Betty Lowary of Canyon City. The words, "simply delicious," best describe the food served during the early morning hours.

Members of the recently orga-

nized Grant County Sheriff's posse presented a snappy appearance in their uniforms. And, they did an outstanding job during the two days.

Adding to the historical interest

of the celebration was the appearance of Abe Lincoln and his body guard at the centennial. Two Portland men, both engaged in the business world, play the roles, and they devote considerable time each year attending events in various parts of Oregon and other areas.

Adding color to the parade Saturday was the appearance of the white oxen from Vale, C.L. "Buck" Lieuallen's old surrey in which Queen Mary Grace rode, and the Indians dressed in their beautiful garb.

Perhaps the most popular place in Canyon City last weekend was the Grant county museum. Hundreds of people visited the museum and inspected the many, many items of historical interest and value. On hand to greet them was the able curator, Charles W. Brown, wearing his goatee and pioneer day toggery complete with a black top hat.

Peace and order were maintained by the Grant county sheriff's posse, the Whiskey Gulch gang posse, the Oregon state police and the Grant county sheriff.

Gov. and Mrs. Mark Hatfield greeted many Eastern Oregon people Friday when they appeared at the celebration. Governor Hatfield delivered an inspiring address when he appeared that afternoon at the annual pioneer day program.

Francis Clemens Sels Fails To Tack Interest To Loans

Francis Clemens Sels, one of the lovable characters of Canyon City in the good old pioneer days, was called "Uncle" by all of the people — not the type of uncle who loaned money and took usurious interest. He loaned money, however, to his friends and he

never worried about repayment of the principal, let alone the interest payments. Some people took advantage of his generosity, it is said, but they were few in number.

When Phil Metschan, Sr., was married in 1865, he struck his boyhood friend, "F.C."

Sels, for a loan to establish himself in the butcher business. Sels loaned the money to him on the one condition that he keep out of the gambling halls. Metschan liked to take a chance once in a while, which is not foreign to the nature of a miner.

Metschan and Sels were close friends during all of their lives. Sels was born in Westphalia, Germany in 1837, and Metschan was born in Hesse Cassel in 1840. They were partners in many enterprises. Phil Metschan, Jr., went on his first hunting and fishing

trip with the two men. They went to a point in Bear Valley, about six miles east of Seneca, in 1886. Sels had filed his preemption claim on the spot, through which a little creek wended its way.

The three arrived at the chosen place at dusk. Before the supper hours, Sels, an expert fisherman, had filled his basket. The sportsmen had fish for supper. They reported the little virgin stream was simply "lousy with trout."

During the fall of 1947, Mary Gray Vancil of Klamath Falls presented to the Oregon Historical society the duffle bags which Sels carried on his saddle from Ureka, California to Canyon City where he arrived in 1862 with the gold discovery party. Sels attended the miners' meeting on July 4, 1862 on Whiskey Flat in Canyon City. Five thousand miners cast their votes at this meeting.

The saddle bags used by Sels were hand made, largely of boot tops. The outer flaps were made of elk hides. They were hung over the horn of his saddle during his dangerous journey from Yreka to Can-

yon City. "Uncle" must have considered it dangerous for on the left side of his saddle bags is a scabbard for his dirk, and on the right-hand side, likewise, protected by a flap, is a holster in which he placed his long-barreled pistol. It was so arranged that the handle of his pistol was under his right arm at all times.

In later years, Sels never carried either pistol or dagger. In addition to provisions for the pistol and dagger there are two compartments in the saddle bags — one no doubt for a flask of whiskey, the other ... maybe for a handkerchief, a few cans of sardines or something else that would last him for a trek over the desert.

Mary Gray Vancil used Sels saddle bags for more than 40 years. The daughter of William P. Gray, one of Grant county's pioneer sheriffs, she was an expert horsewoman. William P. Gray succeeded Phil Metschan, Sr., in the butcher business in Canyon City when the latter went into the general merchandising and banking business.

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