

# Ione's historic Woolery House being restored by the Ladds

**By JUSTINE WEATHERFORD**  
Ione is a city of many attractive homes with nice yards—some are modern, some are quite old. One older home that is very eye-catching is the large Victorian house built by J.A. Woolery in 1900. Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Ladd who now own it are working at restoring some of the original glory of this home, that like people has had a varied life experiences. Both the Ladds had World War II service: Lorraine as an army nurse and Elmer as a sea-going marine.

**Assistance Coming**  
The Ladds will soon be assisted in the restoration by an older daughter, Christine, and her husband, Donald Thomson, a building and decorator of Phoenix, Az., who are expected to reach Ione in a few weeks. The Thomsons will live in the Morgan house (formerly occupied by the Herb Ekstrom Srs.) which was built in 1896. Son-in-law Don will be learning the cattle business in which his wife has already had some experience. The family plans to restore this fine old home also. This year they purchased the old Victorian type doors which were used as partitions in Dr. McMurdo's office to possibly fit into the restoration.

**In the Woolery House**  
The Ladds and their children Richard 10 and Sylvia Marie 7, are the latest family who have shared the many rooms and enjoyed the sunlight coming through the stained-glass sections of the lovely old windows. Mrs. Victor Rietmann who played in that house as a little girl and who lives across the street from its front door today says she believes eight families have shared its rooms: Woolerys, Mallorys, Casons, Loren Hales, Laxton McMurrays, Oscar Lundells, and Mary Holtz Dabbs, from whom the Ladds purchased the house. Mrs. Rietmann played with the daughters of the builder and still counts the youngest as a special friend.

**An Original Occupant**  
The writer's recent visit with Mrs. D.J. Conway of King City near Tigard, who was born in the house in 1902, brought forth a fund of information about the first family there and the original condition of the house. Josephine Conway is the fourth of the Woolery daughters. Her sisters were Audrey, Edna and Velmaleta. She has pictures of the house with her family on its porch which prove that the house was not always white. Its siding was green and its porches and trim were a light tan or cream. The high roof-line was accented with iron work that has since disappeared. A picket fence surrounded the yard and vines and shrubs grew beside the porch and large trees were spaced about. In the back lot there was a barn for the horses and buggies. Mrs. Conway mentioned that her father kept some racing hounds.

**The Builder**  
The big, old "History of Umatilla and Morrow Counties" printed about 1900 when the house was being built praises the builder Joseph Augustus Woolery: "Prominent among the leading citizens of Morrow County, a leader in every movement which has for its object the advancement of Ione, a large land owner and a wide-awake merchant."

Born in Missouri in 1859, he moved to Texas and the Indian Territory as a young man. In 1884 he came to Morrow County to work for Parker and Gleason at their sawmill for three years, then became the first stage driver between Heppner and Monument, then went in the sheep business. He married Helen Vilott of a pioneer Grant County family in 1888. He operated a general store at Hardman until 1890 when the Woolerys moved to Ione.

**At Ione**  
He was a successful merchant who carried many farmers during hard times. He served as Ione's postmaster and later as its mayor. A Democrat, he lost a close race for the state legislature. He was prominent in IOOF, Knights of Pythias, Masonry, and the "progressive and flourishing" BPOE. In 1903 he established a private bank which his sister Lee operated in the building that the Ione Branch of the Bank of E.O. still uses.

In the great 1903 flood, Giles French's book says that Mayor Woolery very efficiently moved Ione's population to high ground. No one was hurt and there was little damage there. His daughter Josephine remembers hearing that the water came into the basement of their home. Mr. French further reports that soon after Heppner's ravishing experience of June 14, 1903, "J.A. Woolery came up from Ione to manage

the supplies needed during the rescue and cleanup."

**"Largest Funeral Ever"**

The Heppner Times in its 1908 story following his death on March 5 tells that a special train was run from Heppner the Sunday morning of the funeral "carrying from 150 to 200 persons, at Lexington a large crowd boarded making in all a four coach load." It was estimated that "almost a thousand people gathered." The lodges to which he belonged took part and "contributed largely to the beautiful floral decorations which were very elaborate." Before his death in 1908, J.A. Woolery and Mrs. Woolery gave the City of Ione a large park block. In 1960 a memorial plaque at the park was dedicated to him by Willows Grange. The Times estimated his holdings at "20,000 acres, making him the largest individual taxpayer in Morrow County."

His widow took over the management of his estate with the aid of Mr. C.E. Woodson. In 1909 she married Joseph T. Knappenberg, an attorney from Buffalo, N.Y. who had corresponded with Mr. Woolery. He died in 1942, and Mrs. Knappenberg died in Portland at 96 in 1961.

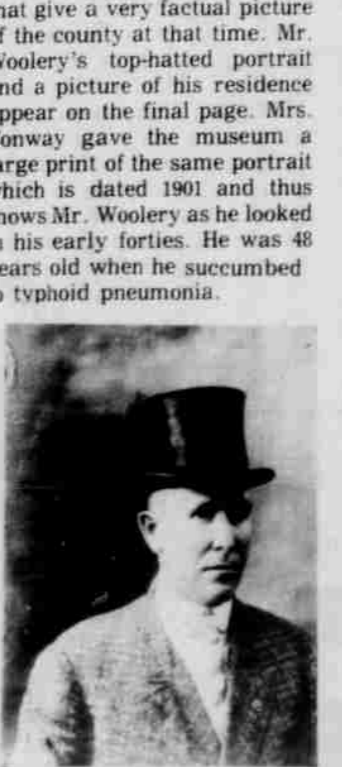
**Woolery Treasures**

Josephine Conway has many family treasures, including an impressive set of Royal Ironstone China in the Oak Leaf pattern which she uses every day. Mrs. Emile Groshens, who accompanied this reporter to the Conway home, sat at their unusual old spinet style pump organ and made a little soft music during our visit. There are delightful family pictures and momentos throughout the home. Josephine showed us a book which fascinated me. It is Dr. Chase's "Recipes and Household Remedies" published in 1892. She loaned me a 24 page pamphlet "Oregon Wheat Lands" printed at Portland in 1905 in which her father extols the virtues of Morrow County's "cheap and fertile lands, where even the poorest may own a home."

**Mr. Woolery's Writing**

On the first page he states, "The writer came to Morrow County 21 years ago. He worked as a farm hand, as a sawmill man, at farming for himself, at mercantile business, and as a banker. He is thoroughly acquainted with the county and is making no second guesses and taking nothing second hand. He has large interests in the county and wants to see it filled up with an industrious and progressive people. He has endeavored to be conservative and to answer just such questions as a prudent man, seeking a new location, would ask. Any further information will be gladly and promptly furnished upon application to the writer."

On page 13 he has words of praise about the four incorporated towns: Heppner "a prosperous place of 1,500 people"; Ione on the same branch of the railroad "a substantial and rapidly-growing town of 800"; Lexington "midway between Heppner and Ione; a prosperous and growing town and a large shipper of grain and other products"; Hardman off the railroad and near the mountains "a thriving little town, surrounded by good farming country"; Irrigon on the Columbia River and main line of the O.R. & N "in the midst of an irrigated district and rapidly growing into a substantial town." He includes many pictures of farms and towns, various statistics, and several pages of questions and answers that give a very factual picture of the county at that time. Mr. Woolery's top-hatted portrait and a picture of his residence appear on the final page. Mrs. Conway gave the museum a large print of the same portrait which is dated 1901 and thus shows Mr. Woolery as he looked in his early forties. He was 48 years old when he succumbed to typhoid pneumonia.



J.A. WOOLERY 1901

**The House Today**  
Mrs. Ladd graciously conducted Mrs. Heard and me through the house and talked

with us about the furnishings they have installed and about their plans for the restoration which they have already begun. They added an ornamental iron fence and have a new custom-made gate marked with their initial. On the sidewalk beneath the front gate the name "Lundell" is cut into the cement. Mr. Thompson of Hermiston made and installed the new iron work. Beside their son-in-law, Donald Thomson, and Mr. Thompson of Hermiston. There is a nice 16-yr-old grey cat which came from Calif. with them that is named "Mr. Thompson"; so one must be alert as to which Mr. Thompson they are speaking about.

**Spacious Entrance Hall**

As we entered through the ample front door, we stepped into a large foyer out of which rises the stairway with its carved newel post, turned rails



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and dark wainscoting, which passes a stained glass bordered window as it starts up. In the large semi-circular floor space of the foyer, the Ladds have placed a large, 110 year-old, square, grand piano which they acquired in Ca. and hauled to Oregon in their truck. The three large windows with their borders of stained glass fit around the piano which is just one of the exciting features of the entrance hall. Between it and the outside door is a very old and interesting German wall clock of carved wood which was given to the Ladds by Elmer's aunt. (Mr. Ladd's family were Portland pioneers. William Sargeant Ladd built the first brick building in Portland and operated lumber and flour mills. He also built the Ladd and Tilton Bank, the first bank north of San Francisco. For a time his widow was known as the wealthiest woman in Portland. Elmer's immediate part of the family migrated south.)

**Other First Floor Rooms**

To the right of the fireplace is the entrance to a good-sized room that the Ladds use as a family room. It is the room in which Josephine Woolery was born. I wish I had asked her if there were once large doors between it and the living room. There is a bathroom and closet off this room which other residents have used as a downstairs bedroom. In both dining room and the family room there are more interesting paintings, each of which has a story about its discovery.

**The Kitchen**

At the back of the house is the kitchen with its own porch and

**The Table, Silver and Picture**

Across from the piano, against the wainscoted wall space between the stairs and the hallway door, there is an impressive arrangement. Lorraine Ladd says the heavy Mexican table is supposed to be over 200 years old. The silver service on it was a Christmas gift from Mr. Ladd to his wife. The oil painting above the table is a Madonna, a Belgian peasant woman and is a prize-winning effort of a European woman painter, De Winne, which they found in San Francisco. Its size, warm colors, and composition blend nicely with the surroundings.



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A focal point, rich in color and old world feeling.



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The new iron grill gate marks the front entrance of the Woolery home in Ione now in stages of restoration by the Ladds. "Mr. Thompson" is the cat who came with the Ladds from California.

**The Living Room**

To the right of the front door, on the north side of the house, the living room holds several davenport, chairs, tables and bookshelves. Its most interesting furnishings, to me, are the paintings on its walls. Two large oils in lovely old frames, are landscapes painted by Albert Bierstadt, an American painter of the 19th century—one shows Mt. Hood and the other the Yosemite Valley. We stepped out of that room through the high, wide, framed opening that has large doors hung in it, and turned right to walk through the hallway to the dining room.

**The Dining Room**

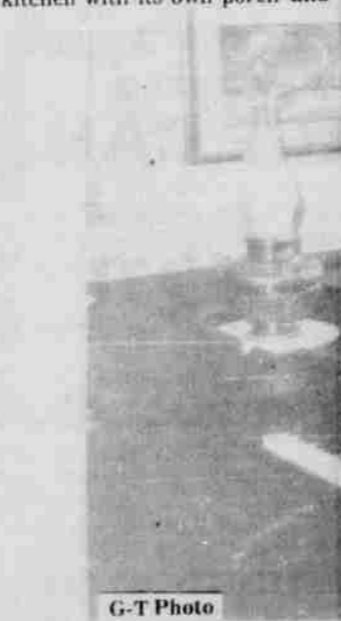
A fireplace framed with ornamental iron and built with small glazed tiles is this room's outstanding feature. Lorraine has found other parts of the metal stove inside the fireplace and plans to restore the doors to it, and to replace the present mantel with the original ornate mantel and mirror. The pillars at each side of the fireplace are very pleasing. This room is furnished with a large maple hutch, dining table and chairs which match it, and several comfortable lounge chairs. It has a bay of three windows on the side opposite the fireplace. There is a builtin China cupboard on the kitchen side.

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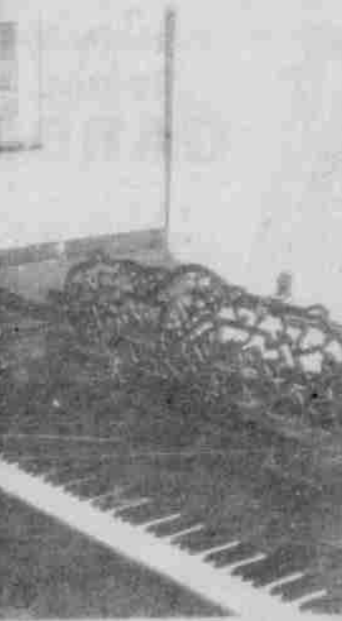


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The fireplace in the dining room to be restored to its original ornate mantel and mirror.

of old Harpers Magazines, and I could see many years of American Heritage. Someday the family hopes to gather its books out of temporary positions in every room and in the hallways and arrange them all together in a library room.

One of the remnants of the house's "boarding house" days is the "Ladies" sign outside one



The old grand piano that came to California around the Horn.

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The Woolery House as it appears today. The Ladds have added the iron grill at the top of the fence. In the original pictures, an iron grill is along the ridge on the left of the cupola.

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Shades of the past.



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Through the fence: an iron hitching post similar to those seen at most southern mansions. This one came from Rancho El Robledo in Carmel Valley.