

Britt Home Waiting Destiny's Next Move



BRITT HOME—Here is the historic residence itself, one of Jacksonville's landmarks. Broken windows on the second floor and an un-



REDWOOD—This plaque commemorates Peter Britt's planting of a redwood tree the day his son Emil was born—March 22, 1862. The tree itself, seen behind the plaque, has flourished.

Sites Foundation Makes Offer for Early Residence

By ERIC WENTWORTH
Mail Tribune Staff Writer
The Britt home in Jacksonville, a "white elephant" worth its weight in memories, waits patiently for destiny's next move.

Peter Britt, a pioneer in the Rogue valley and, particularly, in the field of photography, began its construction the year after Oregon gained its statehood.

But now, while Jackson county and Oregon gird for next year's centennial celebration, this historic residence is threatened as never before with oblivion.

Miss Mollie Britt, daughter and last survivor of Peter Britt, died in the family home Oct. 14, 1954. She was 89 years old.

In her will, she left the home to the Southern Oregon Historical society, provided two conditions were met.

The first was that the society agree to maintain it "as a museum and historical monument in honor of the memory of my father."

The second was that the society be willing to match dollar-for-dollar all expenditures from the \$25,000 fund she would provide for such maintenance.

The society declined. The home reverted to Southern Oregon college as "residuary legatee."

SOC, according to Don Lewis, its business manager, has twice placed the Britt home and other properties on the block—and failed to sell it when no offers were up to the "minimum acceptable bid."

Meanwhile, disaster struck. On April 29, 1957, flames springing from a flue fire swept the upper floor of the house. If destroyed among other things Britt's studio, reportedly one of the last sky-lit photography studios in this country.

In all, according to estimates afterward, about 50 per cent of the building was ruined by the flames themselves and by water and smoke.

Recently, the Siskiyou Pioneer Sites foundation has taken an interest in restoring the structure and its surroundings.

Mrs. Dwight Houghton, wife of a Medford banker and chairman of the foundation's Britt committee, said last week that the house has "endless possibilities."

She pointed out that the foundation did not wish to conflict with the Jacksonville museum. The museum now holds hundreds of Britt's photographs, his photographic equipment, and a quantity of furniture and antiques.

Mrs. Houghton mentioned as one specific possibility a permanent gallery for the Southern Oregon Artists' association. She said the building included a wine cellar, with oaken casks and wine presses, which could be of great interest if restored.

Another use she suggested was a meeting place for the West Side home extension unit.

She said she thought the county court could be approached on the possibility of buying land surrounding the house for park purposes.

But the best-laid plans of Mrs. Houghton and the foundation are of little value unless the Britt home can be acquired. The foundation's first step in this direction has apparently met with frustration.

Last month its offer to take over the home on a 99-year lease was submitted to the state board of higher education. Terms of the offer were that the foundation would pay \$1 a year and set about restoring and maintaining the home as a historical site.

Dispatch Officer William Duhaime, Medford attorney and foundation member who dispatched the offer to the board in a letter, said Friday he has received no reply.

But Lewis said the same day that the board had turned down the offer when it met in Portland. He said the state frowned on the \$1 a year arrangement, considering it a giveaway.

"A lease is definitely out," he said. "The state is interested in a sale only." Lewis pointed out there is some question as to whether SOC—or the state—actually has the right to make such a sale, since it is the residuary legatee. He said the attorney general would have to rule



WATER TOWER—This weathered, ivy-structured building could be restored along with the property in Jacksonville. This and other out-

on this. **Intention of Will**
Later in the conversation, however, he said that the intention of Miss Britt's will is no longer crucial in the eyes of the proper method of disposing of state property.

He said "a sale of some sort" will be the probable solution.

"We have no use for it," he said. "But we would like to see it put to good use." He said its restoration as a historical site would be the "most desirable" use so far as SOC is concerned.

He discussed what he said was the state institution's dual responsibility—to the preservation of culture and to the taxpayers.

Taxpayers' Interest
He said that the taxpayers' interest dictates that the Britt home produce revenue.

Duhaime said he understood that the legal construction of Miss Britt's will has created a doubt on the state's part as to what it can do with the property.

He said the foundation considered its \$1 a year offer a "starting place" in pursuing its interest.

He said the foundation would be interested in purchasing the home "as an abstract matter" at least. He added that of course the purchase price plus the cost, dif-

ficult to estimate, of restoring the building to its former condition would be the deciding factors.

Caretakers
For the time being Mr. and Mrs. Fred Jones—and, according to a crude sign on the front fence, a "Mean Dog"—are employed by SOC as caretakers. The Joneses have evidently kept the place liveable for themselves and little more.

Peter Britt himself was a maker of history. His photographs of pioneer families and of scenery illustrate a fascinating chapter in the development of the Rogue valley. He was, incidentally, the first man to photograph Crater Lake—packing in his heavy equipment through the wilderness in 1874.

His photographs are zealously preserved in the Jacksonville museum.

His home, it would seem, is a part of this history too. It may—or may not—be preserved.

4-H Club News

Kooking Kays 4-H Club
The Kooking Kays met at Mrs. McKay's house on Nov. 13.

Our officers are president, Carol Roach; vice president, Donna Thomson; secretary, Shirley Roach; news reporter, Linda Snyder; game chairman, Terry McManama.

We received our new books and discussed what we are going to do this year. Our next meeting is on Dec. 11.

Antelope 4H Club
The Antelope 4H Livestock held its organizational meeting Nov. 8.

A potluck dinner was served before the meeting. There were five invited guests at the meeting who were awarded the achievement and special awards. They were Marilou Garner and Glenn Klein, 4H agents; R. E. Hein of the First National bank, and Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Lathrop.

At the last meeting Elbert Bigham announced his resignation as beef leader. At this meeting he was given a gift of appreciation. Bill Bigham was given a wedding gift. Everyone was asked to re-

member to bring coffee bands to the next meeting. The coffee bands are going to be used to get an electric percolator for the club.

Two new members were enrolled. They are David Blair, who is taking dairy, and Doreen Blumenfeld, who is taking sewing.

We have several new leaders. Bill Bigham is now the beef leader instead of dairy. Bill Hubbard and Don Green are the dairy leaders.

The new officers elected at this meeting were president, Ronnie Anderson; vice president, Steve Green; secretary, Georgia Hubbard; treasurer, Darrell Stanley; and reporter, Karen Jossy.

The next meeting will be Dec. 18 at the Antelope school house. It will be our annual white elephant Christmas party.

Shady Cove 4H
The girls at the last 4H meeting in Shady Cove are making garment protectors, which was in their 4H book, Charmingly Yours.

Lorraine Buttram, Reporter.

Medford Kitchen Maids
Medford Kitchen Maids held the second meeting at the home of Mary Carol Leavens Nov. 8. Elections were held for club officers.

Elected were president, Mary Ann Carnegie; vice president, Kathy Newcomb; secretary, Judy Scott; reporter, Sarah Robinson, game manager, Mary Kay Hockstater.

Mary Carol Leavens and Judy Scott gave a demonstration on making a hot bun sandwich. Martha Merriam brought a jelly vegetable salad. The sandwiches and salad were served as refreshments with hot chocolate. Southwest Cooking club decided to take Medford Kitchen Maids as a new name.

Martha Merriam, Reporter.

Morse Happy Over Loan for Housing
Portland—UPI—Sen. Wayne Morse (D-Ore.) said Friday he was happy to learn from Public Housing Commissioner Charles E. Slusser's office that a \$20,000 planning loan for the construction of 150 new housing units has been authorized.

Planning funds for 150 new low-rent homes to be built in the Eugene-Springfield area have been authorized by the Public Housing Administration and Urban Renewal Agency of Lane county.

Under a preliminary loan contract, to be filed as quickly as possible with Lane County Housing authority, PHA will make a filing loan of \$20,000.

Upon completion of preliminary planning of the low rent housing, a development program will be developed covering such details as site, sketch plans, and estimated development costs of the new housing.

TYPHOID SHOTS GIVEN
Glassboro, N.J.—UPI—Typhoid fever inoculations were scheduled to start Saturday for 1,000 residents of the Ellsmere section of Glassboro. The state Health Department program resulted for a typhoid outbreak in which one woman died and two children were stricken.

Fine Snow Cover Reported on Shasta

Yreka, Calif. — A two-day storm has accumulated a fine cover snow at the Mt. Shasta Ski bowl which should lay a cooling foundation for an ultimate good cover for skiing.

The new ski bowl had a drift total of from 12 to 18 inches in the recent storm, officials said. More snow was expected in another storm forecast this week, end.

STEEL OUTPUT UP

Tokyo—UPI—Peiping Radio claimed Saturday that Communist China's 1958 steel output passed eight million tons Nov. 10. The claim brought the Red mainland within reach of its goal of 10,700,000 tons set for this year. The broadest said that only four million tons had been produced by August, but that stepped-up production had doubled that figure in the past two-and-a-half months.

Income Tax Trial Of Dave Beck to Resume Monday

Tacoma—UPI—The income tax evasion trial of Dave Beck will resume Monday after a week-end recess.

Beck, former president of the Teamsters Union, is accused of evading about \$240,000 in income tax payments during the year 1950-1953.

In Friday's proceedings a prosecution witness admitted Beck actually overpaid his taxes on the sale of a piece of property in Los Angeles.

In response to a question by defense attorney Charles Burdell, Claude Watson, special agent for the Internal Revenue Bureau, said it was true Beck had overpaid his taxes on the Los Angeles sale.

Involve Change
The defense also brought up another point involving a change in regulations requiring that expense accounts be itemized on tax returns.

Burdell asked Watson if he knew of the change in the income tax regulations. Watson said he was not concerned with the new rule because it did not apply to the Beck case.

Reporting of expense money always has been required, but the regulation Burdell was talking about is one that requires itemization of all expense reimbursements. It will be applicable to returns filed on 1958 income.

Burdell's apparent purpose in bringing this out was to show that the general practice in the past has been to skip itemization of expenses. He contended this must have been so because the government now was making its demands in this connection more definite.

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Three Truckers Are Fined in Court

Portland—UPI—Three Bend Truckers were fined \$200 and given probationary sentences in federal district court here Friday after pleading guilty to not filing federal transportation tax returns.

U.S. District Judge Gus Solomon handed down six months probationary terms to truckers Herbert Mayfield, 44, and William Horsell, 37.

Emil Dachtler, 47, formerly a trucker, now working as an engineer in a laundry, was put on probation for a year.

The three men failed to pay the government the 3 per cent transportation tax they collected from their customers.

Robert R. Carney, chief assistant U.S. attorney, said Mayfield failed to pay \$1,000, Horsell \$900 and Dachtler \$600.

The three have since made restitution, the court was told.

Grange News

Phoenix Grange
Phoenix grange met Nov. 11 in regular session with Master Charles Johnson presiding. Dr. and Mrs. Robert Wilcox were voted to become members and a demit was granted Mr. and Mrs. Barney Lewin who have moved to Culver City. Past Master Dee Hendrickson gave the third and fourth degree obligation to Mabel Johnson.

Dr. Edward Durno was appointed to represent the Phoenix Grange at the Rogue Valley Memorial hospital stockholders meeting for election of officers.

A community service testimonial plaque was received from the national grange and Sears Roebuck and Co. foundations, cosponsors for the community improvement contest.

Officers elected for the ensuing year were Master, Charles Johnson; overseer, Edith Poe; lecturer, Dee Hendrickson; steward, Frank Perl; assistant steward, Mark Norton; chaplain, Mona Ferns;

treasurer, Olin Poe; secretary, Dorothy Whiteside; gate-keeper, Lesbia Lattie; Ceres, Ethel Hockersmith; Pomona, Mabel Johnson; Flora, Mabel Cox; lady assistant steward, Myrtle Hixson; executive committee, Melvin Lattie, Sol Cox, Willis House; musician, Mabel Quackenbush.

Chaplain Flora Klarin reported Mabel Quackenbush was now convalescing at home after surgery and Ora Smith was resting after minor surgery.

Home Economics Chairman Coral Schroeder announced the club will meet at the home of Dorothy Perl Nov. 19. Desert luncheon will be served at 1:30 p.m. and the serving committee for the evening will be Mabel Penland, Stella Good and Charles Setchell.

Edith Poe, Pomona HE chairman, announced there will be a Home Economics conference Nov. 22 held in Phoenix grange hall starting at 11 a.m. with a potluck lunch at noon. District chairman, Nora Cracraft, will preside. All Grange ladies are invited to attend. Discussed will be five contests to be judged in Pomona Grange.

Klamath Youth Injured in Crash

Klamath Falls—UPI—Wendell Smith Jr., 18, son of former city councilman Wendell Smith of Klamath Falls, was seriously injured Friday evening when the car he was driving went out of control on a snow-slickened road here.

His condition was improved and considered good Saturday.

State police said the youth's car skidded on a curve, overturned and slid for 327 feet. Smith was found unconscious beside the car.

Wendell Smith Sr., is owner and operator of Klamath Brick and Tile company.

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