

# Valley Growth Watched

## From Barneburg Hill

Features

Sports

MEDFORD MAIL TRIBUNE

MEDFORD, OREGON, SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 1963

By EVA HAMILTON  
Mail Tribune Staff Writer

When residents of Rogue Valley Manor atop Barneburg Hill exclaim about their view, Mrs. Mollie Keene of 136 South Oakdale ave., Medford, wants them to know they are not the first to appreciate it.

From this same vantage point, three generations of Barneburgs watched events in the valley below many long years ago. The sprawling early settlement of Jackson county, the changing weather patterns were appraised from Barneburg hill.

Mrs. Keene remembers most clearly the coming of the railroad in 1887. She was a Barneburg and with other members of the family, who resided in the house now converted into K-Boy Ranch, home of the radio station on Barnett road, Mrs. Keene climbed the hill to watch the construction workers.

### Created Wide Interest

The meeting of the California and Oregon surveys were not in alignment and construction of the last section created wide interest. The hilltop was a "box seat" in the outdoor theater in which the Barneburgs watched the laying of the rails.

Mrs. Keene, widow of Dr. J. M. Keene, Medford dentist, is the last surviving member of that generation of Barneburgs. It was her father, Frederick Barneburg, grandfather of Harry Barneburg, a director in the Southern Oregon Historical Society, who purchased 160 acres of land southeast of Medford in 1860. From this purchase the Barneburg estate expanded to 1,685 acres, encompassing the area from the present Sacred Heart hospital to the Hillcrest-Phoenix road.

At the age of 18, Frederick Barneburg made his first trip by pack train into the Rogue Valley from Missouri. The gold rush to Jacksonville was on and he planned to obtain property between Medford and Jacksonville.

### Receives Word of Death

Before he had time to complete his investigation of donation land claims, however, he received word that his father had died in Missouri, leaving many debts. Frederick returned to his home state riding a mule from Sacramento, Calif., and arrived with his face masked with a beard and his belt filled with \$20 gold pieces.

His mother opened the door, saw a man with a beard, riding a mule, failed to recognize her young son and slammed the door.

(That beard, he wore it the rest of his life, got the southern Oregon pioneer into a more embarrassing situation when he went bear hunting with John Griffin. He awakened in their Dead Indian camp to find that a rat had played barber during the night. There was a part of the beard trimmed and this didn't convert it into a Van Dyke, his grandson recalls the story.)

Missouri had become a hot bed of pre-Civil War clashes during Barneburg's brief absence. He decided to pay his father's debts and return to Oregon. This he did in 1860 after marrying Electa Norton. He joined the 1860 train composed chiefly of Furrys, Nortons and Barneburgs. He found the land he had wanted was taken so he bought out John LaTourette, paying him \$1.25 an acre.

The going was not easy but Barneburg, who had come to the states from Germany at the age of eight, had learned to build the better mouse trap, so to speak.

Freighting was the popular means of deriving an income at the time. He soon learned that it was not profitable to drive empty wagons one way. He raised hogs, butchered them and made ham and bacon. When he set out for Roseburg and Redding for supplies his wagons were filled with hams and bacons which he sold at the freight stops. This way he collected for the meat and again for transporting whatever supplies he brought back to Medford. He was able to stay in business while other freighters went broke.

Barneburg's biggest problem became the coyotes that threatened his stock. His greatest assets in combatting this problem were two old hounds, Bugle and Fatty. Mrs. Keene remembers them well and Harry Barneburg recalls many stories told about them by his father, Pete Barneburg.

### Rooster-Coyote Story

Harry's favorite story, however, concerned a rooster and the coyotes. His grandfather had a rooster which he staked out as a lure to draw the coyotes into a trap. One morning he found a coyote in the trap and the rooster staked very close by. When the coyote saw the man, his captor, he apparently realized he had been tricked, lashed out at the poor rooster, which had come safely through the night, managed to reach him and tore him to pieces before Barneburg could intercept the attack.

The first Barneburg home was a log cabin just off what is now Black Oak drive below Barneburg hill. Harry Barneburg was born in a house built on the same property. The log cabin is gone but the house in which Harry was born is still there.

The poet says "It takes a heap o' livin' in a house to make a home." Webster's dictionary defines a home as "The house habitually occupied by a family." The Barneburg houses qualified as homes, all of them. Not just one, but two grandmothers lived with the Barneburgs—Mrs. Jemina Norton, mother of Mrs. Barneburg; Mrs. Anna Barneburg, mother of Mr. Barneburg. Mrs. Keene's house on South Oakdale meets the "habitual" qualification. She has lived in it for more than 70 years.

### Return to Birthplaces

Mrs. Keene and her nephew returned to their birth places for brief visits Monday.

Barneburg pointed out the spot in Lawson creek where he caught 13 salmon with a pitchfork 60 years ago when the water was high in the willows. He recalled how water rushed through Muddy creek in front of the house, now home to the M. C. McCartneys.

He commented that he predicted, when the new St. Mary's school was built in the area, that it would be flooded and it was.

"I know those draws," he explained. "I've seen the water rushing through too many times to be mistaken."

"Grandmother Barneburg was an enthusiastic gardener," Barneburg continued his recollections, referring to his great-grandmother. "Somehow her gardening didn't coincide with her son's hog producing. He imported a highly bred boar and the boar chose a Great Grandmother's garden patch as a rendezvous. She loved to go to the garden with a lump of salt in her apron and eat cucumbers, right off the vine. When the imported boar moved into the cucumber patch she announced his days were numbered. She didn't kill him but she did break his hind leg with rocks and from then on he was confined to his pen."

### Carriage House Gone

"It is all so different. The carriage house is gone, the fireplace is gone," Mrs. Keene, who will be 89 next month, lamented as she viewed her childhood home on Barnett road.

From this country home Mrs. Keene moved with her parents to the South Oakdale residence she still occupies. Life was lighter and gayer. She remembers dancing on the freight cars when the Jacksonville railway was built, skating on ponds behind the house, and riding horseback all about the town. She attended school in the city school, which was converted into the Alford home on West 10th street.

On Dec. 23, 1901, Mary Alice (Mollie) Barneburg married Dr. Keene in San Francisco. They returned to the South Oakdale house but she made repeated trips to San Francisco. Her contemporaries recall that she and her sister, Ida, bought their clothes in the city.

"They were beautiful women and they wore beautiful hats and all the furbelows high fashion then required."

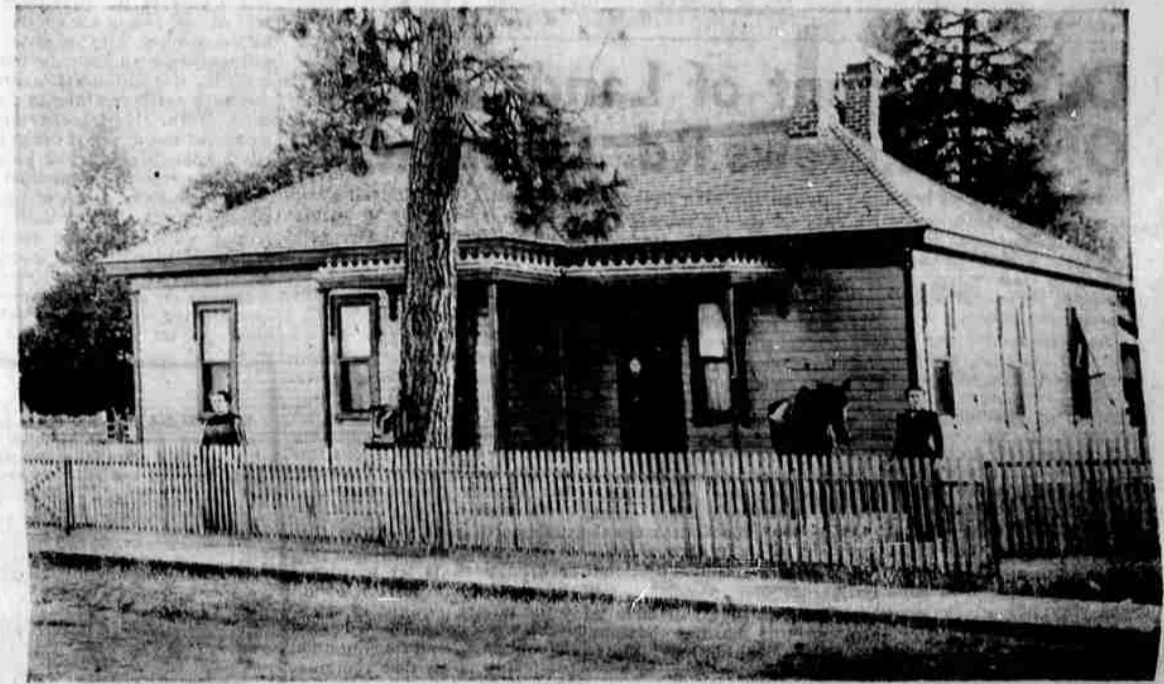
### Planted First Pear Orchard

Mrs. Keene's sister, Ida, married W. H. Stewart, son of J. H. Stewart, who planted the first pear orchard in the valley. Mrs. Keene helped pack the first carload of pears that went out of the valley. Her brother-in-law set out the Hillcrest orchard, which was sold to Julian and Ethel M. Perkins. Perkins later sold it to the Hillcrest Orchard Co., R. H. Parsons, president.

Barneburg remembers many stories of Perkins. He owned one of the first automobiles in Jackson county.



Mrs. Mollie Keene poses with her nephew, Harry Barneburg, on the steps of her South Oakdale home. The flowers around the porch are proof of her gardening ability, which she still enjoys.



The Barneburg home on South Oakdale, where Mrs. Mollie Keene has made her home for 70 years, was like this in the Horse and Buggy days. Standing in the doorway is Mrs. Frederick Barneburg. Mrs. Keene is on the left and Mrs. John LaTourette, in fashionable riding habit, holds her horse on the right.

When he came to town he always wore boots. The reason was—whenever his auto frightened horses, Perkins climbed out and led the horses, pulling a wagon or a "surrey with the fringe on top," past the car. The roads were muddy. When he reached town he took off his boots and put on shoes.

The 15 acres, constituting Barneburg hill, site of the Manor, were purchased by Barneburg from Abraham Bish, grandfather of Mrs. Harry Barneburg—the price \$1.25 an acre. The hill recently sold for \$45,000, Harry Barneburg was told.

Below the hillside was a cemetery. It was on property then owned by David Ball. Several of the Ball children died in a diphtheria epidemic. Money was scarce and Ball established his own little cemetery in a corner of his farm. The little girl's grave beneath a tree was surrounded by a white fence (Barneburg pointed out the tree).

"Those graves are still hidden under the grass beneath the oak trees," he insisted.

Harry Barneburg attended the same North-Phoenix school his father attended. Describing the building, he noted that boys who smoke cigarettes in school furnace rooms today had their counterpart in the 19th century in lads who spit tobacco through holes in the school room. His father bored a hole in the North-Phoenix school for this purpose. It was still there, covered by two boards, when the school was razed in recent years.

All the Barneburgs were Democrats, Harry emphasized. "There was Virginia blood in their veins."

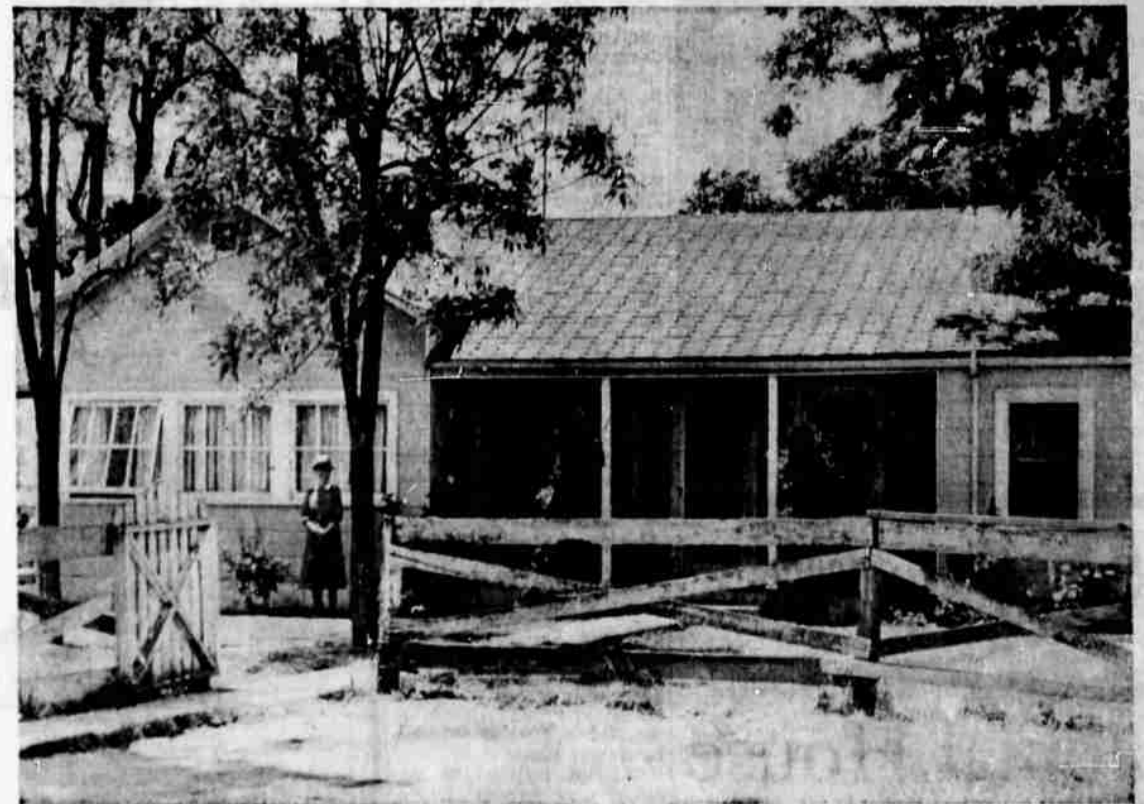
Dr. Keene, however, was an active Republican, personal friend of Jonathan Bourne, Jr., U.S. Senator from Oregon from 1907 to 1913. A postcard sent by the senator to the Medford dentist in 1911 is among Mrs. Keene's souvenirs. It pictures a couple, one person labeled "Atlantic," the other "Pacific," in a caress. The caption reads "The Kiss of the Oceans—1915." This was by way of predicting completion of the Panama Canal in 1915. It was completed earlier. The first ship, history records, passed through Aug. 15, 1914.



Frederick Barneburg, who farmed 1,685 acres in the Medford area, and gave his name to the hill, which is now setting of the Rogue Valley Manor, died pursuing his favorite sport, fishing. He was drowned in Rogue river near Bybee bridge in July, 1907.



Harry Barneburg and his wife, whose grandfather, Abraham Bish, sold the hilltop to Frederick Barneburg, paused for this photo while making a tour of the former Barneburg estates. This is the house where Harry was born.



Mrs. Mollie Keene remembers well the house where she was born. It is greatly changed but still of solid construction, as were all buildings constructed for her father in the early days. She consented to pose near the former living room window Monday.