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## 'The Light House'

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It is sad to see a once grand old house going down shingle by shingle, board by board.

Watching its rafters and beams bared to the world seems almost indecent. It is like glimpsing a once beautiful actress in a state of deshabille minus her makeup in the early morning light.

For there is a definite similarity between old houses and former actresses: Each in her time has played many parts. This is so of the old Ray house now being razed at the corner of West Main and Quince sts. in Medford.

The house was built by Dr. C. R. Ray in about 1907. It was purchased by the Assembly of God church in 1950 and it is now going down to make way for a parking lot.

Howard Commons is directing the razing and the lumber is to be converted into a business building.

### The Story of Light

The story of the Ray family is the story of light — the kind that comes on with the pull of a switch — and its advent in the Rogue River valley. The house, now dark except for the occasional reflection of a shingle fire in one of its many windows as the demolition continues, was once ablaze with light upstairs and down, inside and out.

It was, with admiration, called "the light house" by many. For Dr. Ray and his brother, Col. Frank H. Ray, built Gold Ray dam and developed the power company, which is today serving southern Oregon as Pacific Power and Light.

They used their own product. Even the bathrooms, upstairs and down, were heated as well as illuminated with electric lights. There were eight or 10 rows of lights in the bathrooms and 12 lights to the row to generate heat.

There were lights in handsome fixtures on the veranda which encircled the front and two sides of the house. There were many lights on the balcony which was a second floor replica of the veranda. There was a fireplace heated by electricity. The first electric home heating known to the valley was found in the Ray house.



Colonel Frank H. Ray, New York financier, spent much time and money in Jackson county during the early 1900s. He provided the capital for the Ray industries, launched by his brother.

Electric power, however, was just one of many industrial projects brought to the Rogue River valley by the Rays.

The dam was built to satisfy a need for power to operate the Ray mines.

Mining brought the Rays to the Rogue River valley. Dr. Ray left his practice in Chicago, lured to Alaska by the gold rush. It wasn't what he expected and he decided to practice medicine in Seattle. He remained there about a year then, with his family, decided to return east. His brother, Colonel Ray, convinced him he should stop off in southern Oregon and investigate the mines he had purchased in the Gold Hill area.

### Stop Off and Stay

Dr. Ray and his family stopped off and they stayed. He decided to direct the operation of the mines. Colonel Ray of New York was one of the vice presidents and organizers of the American Tobacco company and had access to adequate capital for launching the Ray industrial projects.

Dr. Ray furnished the creativity. He was operating the Braden mine with steam when he got the idea of putting an electric plant in the river. Bonds were sold on the New York market to raise additional capital for the electric plant.

The stretch of water up the river from Gold Hill, now known as Gold Ray, was chosen as place for the dam when the city of Gold Hill wanted too much money for a site. The Rays, with their daughters, Ina and Mabel, and sons, Frank and Charles, were then living in Gold Hill.

When installation started, the Rays decided to enlarge the plant and furnish electricity to Medford, Jacksonville, Central Point, Grants Pass and Ashland. The plant was known as Condor Water and Power company. **Coffer Dams Constructed**

Coffer dams were constructed first to pull the water away from the area to permit construction of the permanent dam.

High water and other problems beset the project. Several times the logs of the coffer dam went floating down the river. The project, hiring about 100 men, had to start all over again. Hay was sometimes dumped into the water to slow the washouts and the investors began to believe the taunts of the people who declared early in the game that the Rogue would never be harnessed.

Excitement occurred when someone, obviously opposed to the project (and there were many such people) planted dynamite at the dam site. It was found before any damage occurred and patrols were placed on 24-hour duty. The men were again called off the job when fire broke out in the heavy timber then growing between the dam site and the lower Table Rock. Dr. Ray sent all the workmen to fight the forest fire.

The late Chase R. Masters of Portland was contractor for installation of the coffer dams. H. C. Stoddard was the electrical engineer and Civil Engineer Perm is also remembered for participation in the installation. When the water was cleared from the river bed another opportunity to mine presented itself and Dr. Ray was quick to recognize the potential.

### Gold Panned, Sluiced

Gold was panned and sluiced, and Miss Mabel Ray of Medford remembers well going to visit in the home of Dr. Joseph Hill, operator of Hill's Military academy in Portland, with a bottle of gold nuggets from the river bed to show the Hill stepdaughters, who were friends.

The main dam also was constructed of logs, Charles Ray of the Ray Real Estate and Insurance agency in Medford, relates. The logs were bolted down to the bedrock and the spaces were filled with concrete. There were no cement mixers then and six or seven men would line up with shovels and mix the cement and gravel. Equipment for installation of the plant was taken across the river on barges.

One unit of the dam was operated with what was called a rope drive, Ray said. When it broke down it was necessary to find a rope splicer quickly.

### Extensive Timber Holdings

The Rays also had extensive timber holdings in southern Oregon and a sawmill was established in the backwater at Gold Ray to care for this timber. Logs were floated down the river from the Prospect domain and shoved along by boatmen to the log boom.

After building the power plant at Gold Ray, the Ray interests decided to construct Prospect No. 1 plant and the new power source was joined with Gold Ray by line 6.

The Prospect venture was a difficult undertaking. Equipment was hauled from Medford, 45 miles down the valley, by three and four horse teams and wagons.



The coffer dam, constructed to open the way for installation of Gold Ray dam, was being built when this photograph was taken at the bend in Rogue river with the lower Table Rock in the background. On the right is the railroad crossing sign. The Southern Pacific line was given steady patronage by the Rays.

There was a 200-foot drop down into the river canyon to negotiate.

There are still persons in the valley who worked on the project and remember the period as the most exciting one in the industrial development of Jackson county.

### Live Near Gold Ray Dam

The Rays for a number of years lived in a lodge near the Gold Ray dam, constructed by Colonel Ray as quarters for a hunting and fishing club that never quite materialized. The whole family made trips to Portland and San Francisco for shopping and later for schooling.

Ina attended St. Helen's Hall in Portland and Mabel went to Anna Head and to Miss West's in San Francisco.

It was quite common to flag the train with a lantern at the dam and climb aboard the train. There are those who insinuate that the generosity of the Southern Pacific in this matter was perhaps precipitated by consideration then being given to electrifying the railroads. Anyway, a miniature depot was set up at the dam for the Ray family. Dr. Ray served on a rivers and harbors committee and made frequent trips by train to Washington, D.C.

In about 1907 the Condor Water and Power company became known as the Rogue River Electric, which continued to operate in Oregon while a sister organization, so to speak, operated in northern California as Siskiyou Light and Power. It was the merger of the two in 1913 that created the California Oregon Power company (Copco), recent predecessor of Pacific Power and Light. **Mine Closed Down**

World War I took its toll from the Ray empire. Colonel Ray was in London when war broke out. He had the Braden mine closed down and all the machinery taken out.

It had been "one of the most important mines in Jackson county," according to the Oregon Metal Mines handbook. The mine got its name from Dr. James Braden.

It was sold to Colonel Ray in 1900, but he continued to call it the Braden mine. In 1907 the mine produced more than \$30,000, according to the mineral industries report of the state of Oregon.

It was the Gold Hill mine, however, about which the fabulous mining tales were told. It was commonly called the Gold Hill pocket and production reports vary from \$400,000 to \$500,000.

### Brick Plant Included

A brick plant at Tolo was another Ray enterprise. The bricks in the Alex Sparrow house on Kirtland rd., now home of the James Firths, came from the Ray kilns. An electric train was operated to carry clay to the plant. The Ray family often rode on this train and on the electric car, which went down into the Prospect canyon. The Prospect hotel, now operated by the James Heston Grieves, was Ray property and housed guests from many corners of the nation, brought to southern Oregon by the Rays.

The family owned 10,000 acres of farm land in the Tolo-Gold Hill vicinity. Some of it was purchased to avoid damage suits which might develop from mining tailings or the overflow of water in the dam region. A 12-inch pipe was installed to carry irrigation water from the dam area to the McDonough farm about 1 1/2 miles away. All the farms continued under the names of the owners from whom Ray purchased the acreages, most of which are now included in the Cal-Ore holdings.

Also in the Gold Ray dam area was a granite quarry operated by the Rays. The granite in the Copco building and in the Masonic building, both on Medford's Main st., came from that quarry.

### Frequently Recalled Memories

Trips to the mines are among the most frequently and intentionally recalled memories of Miss Ray and her brother, Charles. There was a French chef at the gold mine and both Rays remember the festive meals and the table where family and crew dined. It was a table with a revolving center (lazy Susan style) and its store of fruits and vegetables "turning round and round," gave a carnival atmosphere to dining, particularly inviting to former Chicago children.

From Gold Ray, the Rays moved into a rented house where the Hotel Medford now stands, then to a Newtown st. residence while awaiting completion of the West Main st. house.

A small planer was brought to the site to provide the right finish to the lumber going into the house, which became the family dwelling for many years. Then Dr. Ray died while traveling home from New York. Mrs. Ray lived only three more years.

Miss Ray, alone, called the place home, but another war soon brought new faces to the house. The first architect-engineers for construction of Camp White and their families rented rooms. The camp was organized and five army couples rented five rooms.

### Real Estate Office Opened

A real estate office was opened in the home by H. L. Cook. Miss Ray became a rotary public and the house became polling place for the voting precinct. Then it was sold to the Assembly of God church next door. It was used for various church classes and for wedding receptions.

Its varied career came to a smooth end this summer when it was sold. It is now being torn down for the lumber that is in it, good solid lumber, sawed and planed in the mills of its original owner.

It is probably necessary that the old house come down in just the manner it does today. But it would seem more fitting if one of the sonic booms that occasionally makes its windows clatter, as a plane goes over from Kingsley field, Klamath Falls, could raze it with final blast.



Dr. C. R. Ray, who left his medical practice in Chicago to join the Alaska Gold Rush, developed several industries here in addition to bringing electricity to the Rogue River Valley.



This picture of the Dr. C. R. Ray home on Medford's West Main st. was the first one taken after its completion. The climbing roses and rose garden, which added beauty to the area for years, had not been planted.



This is probably the last photograph that will be taken of the Ray house, which is to be replaced by a parking lot to be used by the Assembly of God church next door. The building was sold by the church to men who are tearing it down.



Completion of Gold Ray dam in 1903-04 was cause for celebration and this photograph, taken by the late Vinton Beall of Beall lane, shows the crowd assembling for the festivities. The green boughs which covered the cook house and dining room added shade as well as decoration to the setting.