

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

FOR

THE CITY OF TALENT, OREGON

Prepared By

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Talent, Oregon, located in the southern portion of the Bear Creek Valley, between the larger communities of Ashland and Medford, is situated in a region that was among the first settled during the pioneer period of Southern Oregon's history. Its fertile soil attracted skilled farmers, who quickly turned the lands lining Wagner Creek into a major agricultural area, one that helped provide food for the regions' larger communities.

By the early 1880s the village that would become known as Talent was organized at the head of Wagner creek. Within a short time it developed into the primary service center for the agricultural and natural resource-based activities that surrounded it. Located along the traditional north-south transportation corridor through the Rogue River Valley, the new town benefited from southern Oregon's connection to the railroad in 1883-4, gaining distinction as a post office in February of 1883. As the valley economy turned toward the orchard industry, Talent continued to provide a shipping and service point for the expanding orchard industry, with packing and related concerns developing into major employers in the city. After incorporation, in 1910, Talent continued to prosper. Both before and after a disastrous fire in 1911, construction of commercial and residential structures reached an all time high, essentially establishing the visual character of the city's core. Throughout the 1920s, Talent continued to benefit modestly from its location as a logical connection point in the series of transportation routes that supplanted the railroad as the major link between the area and its larger neighbors — the Pacific Highway, opened in 1913 and rerouted in 1938, and then, after 1963, Interstate 5.

In the years following World War I, however, the improved access to adjacent communities provided by the rise of the automobile, coupled with the decline of the railroad as the sole freight option, substantially reduced Talent's role as a shipping point. The importance of the local service and professional community was additionally effected by the improved access to the larger cities to the north and south. Most major industrial employers left Talent or simply closed their doors. With the economic impact of the Great Depression, this trend was greatly expanded.

Partially as a result of the decline in prominence of agriculture, mining, and logging as an element of the Talent economy, in the years following the World War II the community was transformed into a predominately residential one, offering an easily accessible, and affordable, alternative to Medford and Ashland. In recent years, as development pressures in the Rogue River Valley mount, that trend has continued. Talent and its surrounding environs have drawn increased development pressures, with

rising populations and building activity. The past decade has seen increased interest in the historic core areas of the community, with renewed potential for both the revitalization, or the insensitive remodeling or demolition, of the city's earliest structures..

The following Historic Context Statement documents the development of Talent from 1851 to the postwar period. It is not intended as a complete history of the city but rather as an overview of the major development forces that have helped shape the community. By increasing the ability to evaluate Talent and its built environment in context, the City can make informed decisions that effect its historic residential, commercial and public resources.

No project such as this would be possible without the assistance of a number of individuals. The Talent City Council, members of the Planning Commission, Urban Renewal Agency board and others saw fit to pursue this study. City Administrator Tony Paxton, and City's staff have been most helpful in providing access to records, documents and other information. The Talent Historical Society, particularly Marla Cates, continue to support the restoration and revitalization of the city's historic core area. Longtime and former residents of Talent, especially Lida Childers, Bill and Mary Bagley, and Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Breese, have offered their own memories, and momentos, that substantially augment the completeness of this document. Among many others, they have my special thanks.

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PART I: OVERVIEW

I.0. CONTEXT TYPE

The following Historic Context is geographically focused on the historic development of the City of Talent, Jackson County, Oregon identifying themes and resources types significant within that community.

I.1. PROJECT BOUNDARIES

Geophysical

The following Context documents the City of Talent, Jackson County, Oregon and those lands contained within the city's Urban Growth Boundary as shown on the revised map of the city dated January 1991. This irregularly-shaped area includes all the incorporated areas, generally located to the west of Interstate Highway 5, and spreading in a westerly direction from the intersection of Highway 99 and Colver Road. Various outlying areas, particularly the area generally known as the "Wagner Creek" area, located southwest of Talent along the banks of that waterway, are also associated with the development of Talent and, although not formally located in the project area, are nonetheless recognized to have played a significant role in the city's development history.

Temporal

Generally, the development of the Talent area as covered by this context statement is limited to the years from 1851-2 (the period of initial settlement) to 1944 (fifty years from the present), a period that coincides with the traditional cut-off date for the study of historic and cultural resources per the standards of the National Park Service. Some postwar events of significance in Talent's development have been identified in section 1.3.10 and resources associated with those events, although of recent construction, may merit future study.

I.2. GEOGRAPHIC CHARACTER

The City of Talent encompasses approximately 745 acres (1.156 square miles) on the floor of the Bear Creek Valley at the head of the canyons surrounding Wagner and Anderson creeks, which drain the mountain ranges to the southwest of the city. This range is visually dominated from the city center by Wagner Butte [7140'], named for early area resident Jacob Wagner. From its original town plat, filed in 1889, Talent has through subsequent addition grown south to stretch along the South Pacific Highway to Alpine

Road, west to Wagner Creek Road, and across Interstate 5 toward the foothills of the eastern edge of the Bear Creek portion of the Rogue River Valley. The Urban Growth Boundary, as presently identified, includes another 150 acres, more or less, that extend the study area to the west of the railroad right-of-way along Rapp Road and then easterly in a line parallel with the southern boundary of Sections 25 and 26, Township 38 South, Range 1 West of the Willamette Meridian.

In character, the vast majority of the Talent study area is comprised of flat or gently rolling, valley bottomlands, surrounded to the south and west by open fields or orchards rising into narrow drainage canyons that line Wagner and Anderson creeks. Major north-south corridors are formed by the succession of transportation modes that have served the area. The Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way, running through the center of the community from the north, forms the western edge of the portion of the incorporated area south of Rogue River Parkway. South Pacific Highway (Highway 99) runs the full length of the community, a distance of approximately 1.75 miles from north to south. The developed portion of the community consists of the original plat, loosely bounded by Talent Ave [Old 99], Wagner, LaPree and West, an area of traditional rectilinear lots and blocks. Surrounding additions, most platted in the postwar period, are typical of subdivision development of that era with trapezoidal lots arrayed around cul-de-sacs or gently curving roadways.

I.3. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

"Tallent" is the modern name of the locality formerly called Wagner Creek, from Wagner, the earliest settler. It is a station on the Oregon and California Railway, and a place of some importance in the history of Jackson County, inasmuch as near by was formed in very early times a well-known settlement. In the time of Indian Wars of 1853 the Wagner House was a resort of the surrounding settlers who came there for protection from the savages. Its is now a thriving and busy locality. [Walling 1884:380]

I.3.1. Initial Settlement Period 1852-1860

Initial settlement in the southern extension of the Rogue River Valley lining either side of Bear Creek was almost universally focused at the confluence of the various year-round streams that feed into the larger Rogue River system. Wagner Creek, fed by the snows of the Siskiyou Mountains to the south, thus provided a logical focus for early settlement in this portion of the valley, offering both irrigation and, as the dominate motive power required for any potential industrial development, the promise of future growth. As a result, in 1851, as Euro-Americans were making their first attempts at settling the Rogue River Valley, two individuals, named Stone and Poynetz, filed claims near the creek, in the area that would become Talent.

In December 1851, Stone and Poynetz took up their land claims at the crossing of Wagner creek and resided there for a short time, returning to their families in the East in 1852. An old man named Lewis took a claim adjoining theirs, but going to the Willamette valley, his claim was “jumped” and he failed to recover it. A little later than Stone, Poynetz and Lewis, L.J.C. Duncan, now of Jacksonville, located a claim at Wagner Creek, sometime in December 1851. (Walling 1884:337)

These early attempts at settlement along Wagner Creek were quickly forgotten or abandoned, likely over-run by the rush that resulted from the discovery of gold in Jacksonville in February 1852.¹ The first Euro-American to actually settle, build and remain in the study area was Jacob Wagner [1820-1900] who in Spring 1852 filed a 160 acre Donation Land Claim along the banks of the creek that would soon bear his name.² “On this tract of land, lying about five miles north Ashland, near the site of the present village of Talent, he was successfully engaged in farming and stock raising for ten years.”(Chapman 1904:616-18)

In 1853, with the help of Captain Alden and his men from Yreka, Wagner built a log stockade, that became known as “Fort Wagner.” Intended as a rendezvous for use during the various Indian uprisings that characterized much of the settlement period, the “fort” was essentially a palisade within which the region’s scattered settlers could take refuge and provide for their common defense.³

The walls around this fort covered about an acre of ground and were two feet thick and twelve feet high, with port-holes every few feet all around. Inside the wall was a large blockhouse where the Wagner family lived, and the men told all the women and children that in case of an attack to all run into this house and leave the ground to the full sweep of the men. At each

¹ It was this discovery that almost assuredly provides the motive behind L.J.C. Duncan’s relocation from the study area to Jacksonville. There he went on to become a prominent civic and political figure, playing an important role in southern Oregon’s early history.

² As late as March 1852 Wagner was still plying the mines of northern California and had not yet determined to settle in the Talent area. See “Letter 60 Years Old” as published in the *Ashland Record*, 1912 [Atkinson Scrapbook, p. 70].

³ The exact location of Fort Wagner is apparently a matter of some dispute. Historical evidence, however, corroborated by the personal recollections of W.H. Breese as related to the author, indicate that the fort was located to the rear of what is now 226 Talent Ave, long known as the “Van Dyke” place. The Breese family home was directly south of the Van Dyke/Wagner Fort site. [See also Betty Miller, “His Digging into History Pins the location of old Fort Wagner,” *Medford Mail Tribune*[MMT], 20-Jun-1967, 2C:1-4.]

corner of the wall was a high observation station, where a look-out was kept day and night. (Gillette 1917:65)

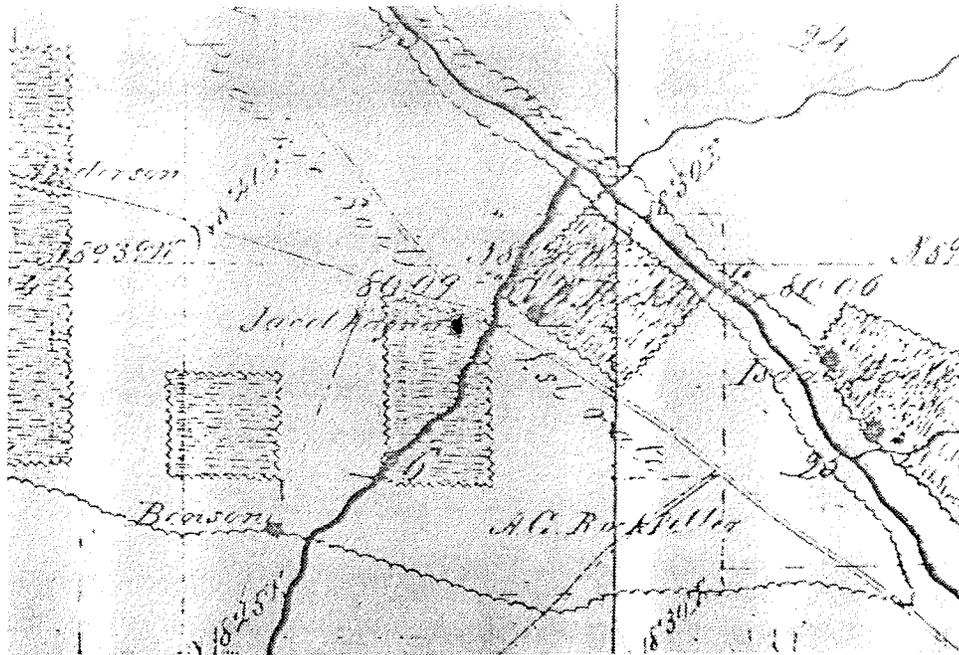


Figure 1.1 Jacob Wagner DLC, from 1855 GLO Survey Map of Township 38S-1W
(Jackson County Surveyors Office)

During the Rogue River Indian Wars of 1853 and 1855, Fort Wagner provided a safe haven for settlers throughout the southern end of the Bear Creek Valley. In August 1853 a group of emigrants arrived in the valley, including Welborn Beeson.⁴

We passed several houses and farms but they were all deserted, [people] having fled to the Fort for protection from the Indians. The fort is just across the little creek from Albert's [Rockefeller] owned by Mr. Jacob Wagner. All the citizens of this part of the valley are collected in it. It is not safe to go away from it. (Beeson, 30-August-1853)

A second important settler in the Talent vicinity was Eli Knighton Anderson, who established his own donation land claim along Anderson Creek at approximately the same

⁴ Then 15 years old, Beeson had begun a daily diary at the start of the family's trek toward Oregon. He would continue to record his thoughts, impressions, and various local events for the remainder of his life. These diaries, most of which are held by the University of Oregon Special Collection, form an invaluable resource in the history of the Talent and Wagner Creek areas. [see UO Spec Coll. "Welborn Beeson Papers, Ax 779, Boxes 1-4]

time Wagner was establishing a claim to the southeast. Anderson, who would remain on the ranch until 1909, was one of the first individuals to recognize the agricultural potential of the Talent region and is generally credited with planting some of the first commercial crops grown in the area.

I crossed the plains in forty-nine to California and mined in various places with varied results until January '52 when I settled in this valley. . . I believe that I brought the first wheat to this valley and oats that was [*sic*] raised in the valley. I sold one bushel of the wheat that I brought out for \$16 dollars [and] this first crop that I raised I sold for \$8 per bushel.⁵

Development in the Wagner creek vicinity continued throughout the 1850s and the region remained modestly attractive for settlement. In 1857 Welborn Beeson documented a total population of 42 in the area including ten males over 25 years of age and six females over 25, living in seven household units.(Beeson 31-December-1857)

1.3.2. Trails and Transportation

Much of the first emigration into the Rogue River Valley followed a roughly north-south trail that ran parallel to Bear Creek.⁶ That road, the Southern Emigrant Route, or "Applegate Trail," was first blazed in 1846 as an extension of the famed Oregon Trail. Branching off of the main road at Fort Hall, the Applegate Trail was intended as an alternative route that would eliminate the dangerous crossing of the Columbia River.⁷ Running west from Klamath County along the modern-day Greensprings Highway, the route descended out of the mountains east of Ashland, past the homesteads of Hugh Barron and Patrick Dunn, and entered into the valley floor, heading north, along the bottomlands that line Bear Creek. Soon, the original trail evolved into a the more formalized "Road to Yreka," as it was called in the 1855 General Land Office survey of Jackson County.⁸ By 1856 the California Stage Company was offering service three times each week between Yreka and Jacksonville over this road.(Scott 1976:21) As stage travel expanded, this basic route, running through the Talent area, remained the primary avenue of transport for the next three decades.

⁵ E.K. Anderson, letter to M.J. Plymale, 4-April-1892. [As reprinted in Dorothy Vore, *Cherished Memories: The Anderson Story*, (Talent, Oregon: Dorothy Vore, 1977), 8.

⁶ This creek was originally named "Stuart" or "Stewart" Creek after Captain James Stuart, who was killed near its banks during the Rogue Indian uprising in 1853.

⁷ Jesse Applegate, arriving in Oregon over the Oregon Trail in 1843 had tragically watched as his son perished in the waters of the Columbia, only miles from the journey's end. (See Rucker 1930:289)

⁸ The 1855 Ives and Hyde Survey of Township 38S-1W, identifies this route as "The Road Up the Valley" but most other histories use the Yreka designation.

1.3.3. Settling In — 1860-1883

With the end of the Indian uprisings and the close of the initial settlement period in the Rogue River Valley, development quickly concentrated in the region's two major cities, Ashland and Jacksonville. Smaller cities such as Phoenix, and unincorporated rural service regions such as Eagle Mills or Wagner creek saw little growth or activity outside of agriculture.⁹ Sometime prior to 1858 Jacob Wagner moved from his donation land claim to Ashland and there became involved in various business pursuits.¹⁰ In 1865, Wagner sold the majority of the eventual townsite area to Horace Root for \$3500.(JCD 4-186) E.K. Anderson, although continuing to reside on and improve his claim north of the study area, also became involved in other interests, developing various mining claims in the hills.

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, the Wagner creek vicinity, including what would become Talent, continued as a region devoted to farming and agriculture. Scattered mining and timber uses, including Granville Naylor's early sawmill, were present further up into the hillsides. Early arrivals such as the Beeson and Stearns families, among others, continued to develop their lands, planting wheat or orchards. Thus, virtually all the construction in the region consisted of barns, outbuildings or dwellings related to the agriculture. Much of this construction likely consisted of early log structures being rebuilt or replaced by "real frame houses" or newer, larger barns as farmers in the area prospered.

[Wagner Creek] is one of the richest portions of the Rogue River Valley and has long been noted for its melons, peaches, corn and tall timothy.(*Ashland Tidings*, 4-January-1878)¹¹

Eagle Mills, Phoenix, and to a greater extent Ashland and Jacksonville, provided most services to the study area and there is little indication of any commercial or mercantile hub in the immediate Wagner creek area prior to the 1880s.¹² Stage lines and other travelers continued to pass through on their way north and south but, as best as can be determined,

⁹ Eagle Mills, centered around the Eagle Flour Mill, was located south of the Talent area near the modern-day intersection of the Pacific Highway and Jackson Street, just south of Valley View.

¹⁰ Various other histories report Wagner moving to Ashland as late as 1862. Beeson reports the John Wisley family, later of the Central Point area, living on the Wagner Farm four years earlier. (Beeson, 31-December-1858)

¹¹ Subsequent references to the *Ashland Tidings* are cited as "AT"

¹² Various timber mills were located further up Wagner creek as early as the 1850s and likely continued to operate throughout the 19th century in some capacity. School buildings were also present in the Wagner creek area, serving as a community focus, from 1854 onward. In 1871 a Baptist Church was formed in Wagner Creek and soon built a meeting house for its members, also providing a community focus in the area. See Margaret Neshiem, *One Hundred Twenty-Three Year's Search for Community* (Gandee Printing Center: Medford, 1976), 20-21.

the townsite area itself remained primarily agricultural land with little, if any, development. The old Fort Wagner site, the focus of pioneer days, continued to decay. An early resident, returning to the vicinity after a 25-year absence, commented in October 1883:

I went to try find the exact place where the picket of the Fort stood. The only sign left was the mound where the old fire place of Jacob Wagner's hospitable log cabin used to stand.¹³

With the close of the 1870s, growing prosperity, and population, helped drive an increased interest in the study area. Larger markets for agricultural products were developing locally and the bountiful fields and orchards of the Wagner Creek drainage were in full production.

The Wagner creek arm of the Rogue River Valley is one of the most fertile, most valuable, and most attractive nooks in the valley and will soon have a larger population in proportion to the number of acres of farming land than any other portion of the county. It will be the truck garden of the valley. (AT 14-December-1883)

Although stage routes and county roads to neighboring towns had eased access for major commercial services, the growing local population and agricultural developments near Wagner and Anderson creeks increased the viability of the development of a local service center. In 1877 a forty-one year old carpenter from Tennessee purchased an eleven acre portion of the original Wagner claim. Three years later he bought an adjoining tract of 95 acres and began to subdivide it into lots and blocks.¹⁴ His name was Aaron P. Talent.¹⁵

A.P. Talent, as he was generally referred to, reportedly arrived in the Rogue River Valley in 1875 and settled in the Wagner Creek area. He likely lived in the study area, renting or leasing land, and supporting his wife and six children through his reputedly considerable carpentry skills.¹⁶

¹³ "Reminiscences of Old Days," *Ashland Tidings*, 31-October-1884, 1:3-4. Written in letter form, dated 21-October-1884 and signed "Prodigal Son." This valuable description of the Talent area was written by an unidentified resident who had returned to the valley for the first time since 1859 and was impressed by the dramatic changes he witnessed.

¹⁴ JCD 7:702 and 9:106. The latter transaction, purchased from Horace Root, concerned the same 95+ acres Root purchased from Wagner in 1865 less the lands Root had donated to the Wagner Creek Baptist Church in 1871 as detailed in JCD 5:493-4.

¹⁵ Early citations often spell this surname "Tallent." This was not a misspelling as genealogical information on the Talent family indicate the family had earlier used the double-L format.

¹⁶ Beeson reports Talent contracted for the construction of various structures, as well as steady casket-making business throughout the early 1880s. By mid decade Talent

By the early 1880s, Talent had opened a general store in the area north of the old fort site, likely the first retail venture between Phoenix and Ashland. "Mr. Talent seems to be a real live business man. Such a resident is a benefit to any neighborhood." (*AT* 31-October-1884). Following Talent's example, other businesses and residents soon purchased lots or larger tracts and in a short time a "town" began to take shape.

... across [Wagner creek] it is all divided up now and is being covered with housing, forming quite a village. I crossed the bridge and found new buildings in every direction. (*AT* 31-October-1884)

A.P. Talent saw early what others either did not, or had chosen not to act upon. The old Wagner homestead site, situated on bottom land, had witnessed each of the series of transportation routes that connected the valley floor with the larger world. With the coming of the railroad, slowly trudging south from Roseburg, the Wagner homestead would almost assuredly be upon the main line and would logically become a service center for the vast agricultural lands that surrounded it. The railroad would mean new markets, new population, and growth unseen since the county was first settled. The coming boom era was obvious to all:

The Rogue River Valley is a most beautiful section of country with a delightful climate. . . It is a fine fruit country, peach and grapes growing to perfection here as well as all the other fruits of northern Oregon. In the past the farmer has labored under the disadvantage of having no market for his products [but] in the future this will be obviated as the railroad will soon pass directly through the valley, bringing both the large markets of Portland on the north and San Francisco on the south right at his door. This building of the railroad will advance the interests of this part of the state very materially and make it one of the most desirable places in Oregon in which to reside. (The Rev. R.W. Selwood, *AT* 28-Sept-1883)

The collection of buildings that developed around Talent's first store continued to grow. In January 1883, Welborn Beeson wrote in his diary "I walked down to Tallent, to fill [out] a blank for a new post office to be located at his store." (Beeson, 16-January-1883). Within a month, on 5-February 1883 Charlie M. Harvey was appointed the first postmaster of the new community. (Helbock 1968:21) Likely a political appointment, he was quickly replaced by A.P. Talent, who continued as postmaster for the next seven years.

became involved in farming, having leased the Maria Colver Farm near Phoenix from 1885 to 1888. See *AT*, 28-September-1888, 3:1.



Photo 1.2: Talent Commercial District, c.1900 (City of Talent Collection)

“Talent”

Commentaries on how the new community was named generally indicate that Mr. Talent had intended for it to be known as “Wagner Creek.”¹⁷ As early as 1881 diarist Beeson referred to a family of emigrants arriving at “Tallent’s” and continually refers to walking to “Talent” for supplies or other errands.¹⁸ As the proprietor of the local store, and its postmaster, area residents naturally received their mail “at Talent’s” and, for whatever reason, the name stuck, being applied to the area in local newspapers as early as September 1883.¹⁹ Despite Mr. Talent’s wishes, the village around his store appears to have been generally known and referred to as “Talent” long before his application for a post office was filed.

¹⁷ See “Aaron P. Talent Dead,” *AT*, 29-May-1913, 3:5. It should be noted that these same histories also universally indicate that Talent was the town’s first postmaster, ignoring Mr. Harvey’s short tenure.

¹⁸ The first such reference located occurs on 18-March-1881. Earlier comments related Mr. Tallent’s activities.

¹⁹ Richard Helbock’s history of Jackson County post offices indicates that the formal name “Talent” dates from the February 1883 appointment of the town’s first postmaster.

Various histories further confuse the issue of Talent's naming by indicating that this was a new name applied to an area previously known as Wagner Creek, or even earlier, as Fort Wagner.²⁰ This is not entirely accurate. Historical accounts make it clear that the term "Fort Wagner" universally referred to that specific structure, not a general location, during the mid-1850s period of its actual existence and use. The homestead, site of the *building* known as "Fort Wagner" was at the extreme northern head of the region understood to be "Wagner creek" in 1883.²¹ Beeson's diaries are explicit in portraying "Tallent" as somewhere he traveled *to*, not somewhere he lived.²² The area that becomes Talent, although often lumped into the larger "Wagner creek" vicinity, was more specifically known as "Wagner's Farm" or simply as the tract near the creek's crossing of the stage road.

It is critical to any discussion of the naming of Talent to recognize that "*Wagner Creek*" had referred to a specific location (i.e. the valley that lines that stream) *prior* to the founding of Talent, and is *still* used to describe that unincorporated portion of Jackson County today. By 1883, the name of "Wagner creek" had long-standing recognition as the name of the extended community of farms and ranches that followed the creek's drainage, a far larger area than Talent's newly platted lots and blocks on the valley floor. This larger area had been formally recognized with the creation of the Wagner Creek School District in 1862 and it was not until 1888, five years after the opening of the post office in the new community, that a separate Talent school district would be formed. Up toward the hillside, the community of Wagner Creek retained its own identity as District 56, and would remain staunchly independent from its younger neighbor until merging with Phoenix in 1951.²³

²⁰ See, for example, the comments of 19th century historian A.G. Walling, reprinted at the beginning of Section 1.3 of this document, or Lewis McArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names*, (Portland: Western Imprints/OHS, 5th Edition, 1982), 717.

²¹ E.K. Anderson's farm, for example, located northwest of the Talent townsite, is beyond the Wagner Creek vicinity, being dubbed "outside Phoenix" in Walling's 1883 history.

²² Beeson uses the term "Tallent" or the possessive "Tallent's" consistently for entries prior to that of 24-June 1883. This may indicate the town, or more specifically the store itself. Later entries use both the single and double "l" forms until late Fall 1883, after which he apparently recognized "Talent" as the standard name.

²³ The new Talent District retained the #22 designation when the original Wagner Creek District was divided. The Wagner Creek area's sense of community as distinct from Talent would remain strong well into the 20th century. Rural reports from "Wagner Creek" were a common feature of the *Mail Tribune* and *Tidings*, providing folksy news of the area through the 1940s. For a discussion of the efforts District #56 went to stave off annexation or consolidation with Talent see Kramer, *Wagner Creek School*, NR Nomination Forms, 1992.

A.P. Talent's interest in naming his new town "Wagner Creek" had a certain logic, as it *was* a term generally understood to include this area between Eagle Mills and Phoenix. However, the new town was only a small portion of a much larger region, a region which thrived before and after the founding of the new town at the head of the creek. Further, "Tallent" was understood prior to 1883 to refer to the village, as separate from Wagner creek, at least according to the Beeson Diaries. Talent's request for designation as "Wagner Creek" was likely not acted upon by the Postmaster General simply out of a concern that doing so would be confusing, running counter to both the historic and then current use of that name.²⁴

I.3.4. Arrival of the Southern Pacific, 1884-1900

By 1872 the rails had moved down the Willamette Valley and extended service to Roseburg, 100 miles north of Jacksonville, then one of the Oregon's largest cities. The trials and tribulations of the attempts to extend the Oregon and California rail line into the Rogue Valley are well documented.²⁵ In short, various circumstances stalled the southerly progress of the railroad at Roseburg for over a decade and correspondingly limited the growth of Jackson and Josephine counties to a substantial degree. Finally, in December 1883, the long awaited connection of the Rogue River Valley achieved reality when the first locomotive from the north dropped down over Sexton Mountain and pulled into the newly built station at Grants Pass.

About 400 people assembled at Grant's Pass to welcome the first passenger train. Many of those present had never before seen such a sight. (*Jacksonville Democratic Times*, 14-Dec-1883)

All the communities of Jackson County awaited with eager excitement as the railroad drew near. Some, such as Medford, which the *Ashland Tidings* referred to as "the new city on the valley floor," owned their very existence to the railroad. The established communities, and even some burgeoning ones, were each equally excited with the prospect of the long-awaited rails. In one of the earliest references to the study area as distinct from Wagner creek, the *Ashland Tidings* noted:

²⁴ Although it seems clear that Mr. Talent's request was not acted up for the reasons given, it must also be noted that a "Wagner" post office was established in Wheeler County, Oregon in March 1882, almost a year prior to Talent's request and may well have played a role in the denial. (See McArthur 1982:765)

²⁵ See, among the many discussions of the wranglings of the competing interests in expanding Oregon's transportation system, David Lavender, *Land of the Giants: The Drive to the Pacific Northwest 1750-1950*, (Doubleday: Garden City, New York, 1958), 356-387.

Times are lively in Phoenix, and the stir seems to have reached *Talent* also. A general spirit of improvement is noticeable in many places in the valley. (*AT*, 9-Nov-1883 [emphasis added])

The rail line continued to inch southward, despite the bad weather of winter and a chronic shortage of railroad ties.²⁶ By January 1884 the line had reached Wagner creek and work on the trestle across the swale was approaching.

Went to John Van Dyke's and there met the construction train and saw them laying track in Van Dyke's field. At the rate they are laying they will be at Wagner Creek by next Sunday. (Beeson 20-January-1884)

Afternoon, I went to see them laying track. Right up to the trestle work on Wagner Creek. The engine will run in sight tomorrow morning. Hurrah for the RR train! (Beeson 7-February-1884)

Although the growing village was likely hopeful that it would have a depot, from the start that appeared doubtful. "It is understood now that the railroad will locate a depot and side track at Central Point. This makes four stations between Ashland and [the] Rogue River — Phoenix, Medford, Central Point and Gold Hill. Whether a station will be established at Tallent is not yet stated." (*AT* 14-Dec-1883)

The first train arrived in Phoenix, to the north, in February 1884, ". . . bringing a heavy load of merriment into town." (*AT* 1-Feb-1884) Finally, after a difficult construction effort, a passenger train pulled into the new Ashland station on 18-April-1884. There, hampered by the continued engineering difficulties presented by the Siskiyou Mountains, travelers and freight would be off-loaded and taken over the summit into California by stagecoach. By Summer 1887 traffic on this line was considerable. Almost 2000 passengers disembarked in Ashland and took the stage over the Siskiyou Mountains to the northern terminus, moving forward from the new city of Redding. (Scott 1976:137) The much anticipated through connection was finally completed on 17-December-1887 with Southern Pacific vice-president Charles Crocker driving a golden spike in the Ashland railroad yards.

In 1884, despite its hopes of securing status as a formal stop on the main line, Talent was initially served, at best, by an informal stopping point. The growth of the village, of course, would require a more formalized link to the main line. "He [Talent] seems to think that eventually the railroad will see the necessity of a side track at this point and will put one in." (*AT* 31-October-1884) Three years later, with the completion of the through line imminent, Talent was still waiting for a station, not to mention a depot. "C.K. Klum,

²⁶ Period sources indicate that it required some 3000 ties per mile of road. A.P. Talent, among others, contracted to provide ties for use between Phoenix and Ashland at 33 1/3 cents each. (See *AT*, 30-Nov-1883)

who was up from Talent Monday, says the people of that place would like a depot established there and hope the railroad management will be able to accommodate them after the completion of the line.” (AT 13-August-1887, 2:5) By early 1888, with the rise in train traffic through the valley following the connection with California, the agitation for a depot in Talent reached full swing. “The side track right-of-way- subject is again being agitated around the street corners and will . . .soon take tangible form.”(AT 10-Feb-1888, 3:5)

A public meeting held was held on 19-March-1888 for the express purpose of developing a strategy to “obtain a depot.” Welborn Beeson was made chairman and S. Sherman and David Payne served as secretaries.

Mr. Sherman got the ball rolling in his characteristic and pointed style [by] showing the advantages which might accrue to Talent and vicinity by liberal donations of land to the railroad company, also stating the fact that instead of doing something ourselves, we are engaged in building up Ashland on the south and Phoenix and Medford on the north of Talent, thus being tributary to all other places, whereas by throwing out inducements to men of enterprise to settle here we might build up our own beautiful place with all its natural advantages over other places, as are conceded by all parties. (AT 23-March-1888)

Negotiations with the railroad continued and an offer of land was apparently forwarded to the Southern Pacific for review. Buoyed by the optimism that Talent would finally secure a rail link, 1888 was a year of incredible building activity.

Our people are in high spirits now with a depot and shipping prospects, as the [proposal] has been acknowledged and forwarded to the railroad headquarters we are assured by the authorities that we shall have passenger and freight facilities immediately. So we expect a boom for our place this season. Many are now building and many more are anticipating to do so soon.(AT, 8-June-1888, 3:5)

In June 1888 grading for the long awaited side-track began and the local newspaper announced “Talent now a R.R. Station.” Welborn Beeson recorded that “The train now stops at Talent for passengers.”(Beeson 18-June-1888) As it looked as though Talent had finally secured a depot, the community’s leaders took the initial step toward establishing a formal town. In August 1888 the various property owners of the land, including Horace Root, E.K. Anderson and the Wagner Creek Baptist Church, as well as A.P. Talent and others, declared “. . .that we have located thereon a town to be known and designated as the Town of Talent and have caused said real estate to be surveyed and subdivided into

Lots, Blocks, Streets and Alleys. . .” The plat was witnessed and filed in July 1889, the first true map of Talent as a distinct geographic area.²⁷

The plat of the town has been made out [and] the streets dedicated to the public so that we may correctly call Talent a “town” now. . . the next thing you hear of Talent, town lots will be selling like “hot cakes.” (AT 31-August-1888, 3:6)

In September 1888, A.P. Talent held a public auction, offering building lots in the new town. “These lots promise to be a good investment, as Talent is making a fine showing of progress and improvement.” (AT, 28-September-1888, 3:1) Apparently the lots did sell briskly and construction of various structures was soon underway throughout the community.

We have no boom in the sense and manner of mushroom growth, but enjoy a vigorous healthy growth. Our place needs no flourish of trumpets to attract attention because to see is to believe and be satisfied. Nature has furnished this place with great natural advantages. Wagner creek, a stream heading from Wagner Butte and running 10 miles through sand furnishes plenty of water for irrigating and washing purposes. . . We have here, in a four mile radius of Talent, the largest number of acres of rich garden land that can be found on the coast, if anywhere. . . Everything grows to perfection, whether cereals, vegetables, or fruit. (AT, 5-October-1888, 2:3)

Despite its growth, positive self-assessment, and the on-going negotiations with the railroad, Talent was still hampered by the lack of a depot. How negotiations broke down remains a mystery but the fact the town was unable to secure a depot was a cause of great local consternation. In February 1890, following a huge flood that complicated travel, “F. Sharp,” the new Talent correspondent to the *Ashland Tidings* opened a column with the following.²⁸

²⁷ In March 1889 A.P. Talent and others petitioned the County Commissioners to adopt a revised townsite plat, basically eliminating alleys in Blocks G through J, citing “. . . oversight, and mistakes” in the original. Thus the final plat was not recorded until July 1889. See Commissioners Journal Vol. 8: 105 and JCD 16:328:31 and 19:230. The original survey of Talent was done by Welborn Beeson, assisted by a man named Kelly. (Beeson 18- and 19-June-1888)

²⁸ Local correspondents often used pseudonyms. “F. Sharp” followed “Vita” as the *Tidings* reporter in the area.

Tho' the trains pass Talent regularly twice a day, yet we neither receive any mail, nor have a chance to send any. It seems they have no mail messenger or mail car aboard. I think the R.R. Co. is treating this inoffensive place meaner than the d-----! (*AT*, 21-February-1890, 2:3)

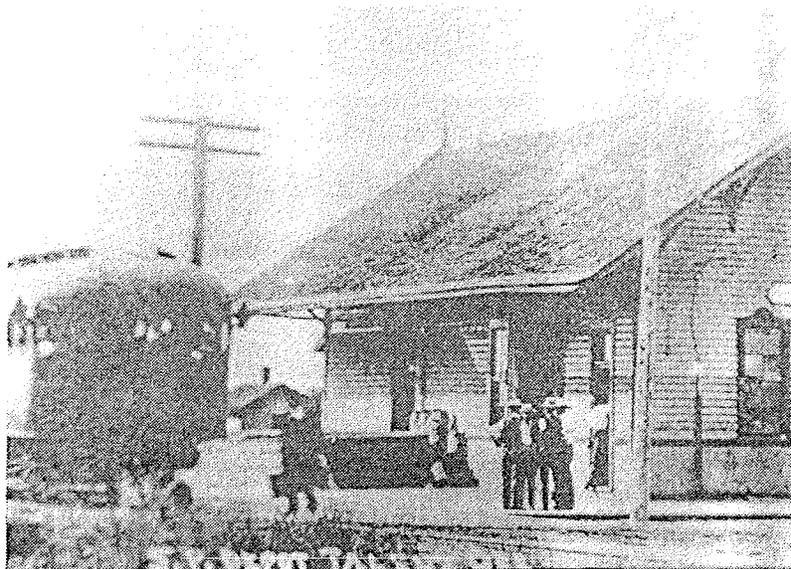


Photo 1.3 Talent Railroad Depot, c.1910 (City of Talent Collection)

Talent's lack of success in securing a depot likely stemmed, at least in part, from the disparity between the town's development and that of the other communities in the valley. Whereas Ashland was the largest city in the county, and thus merited a depot on potential volume alone, other valley cities, notably Medford, offered substantial "inducements" to the railroad in exchange for the prosperity a depot could bring.²⁹ Talent alone of the communities along the main line was neither an established commercial locale, nor willing to "buy" a depot with grants of land. So, although Talent is often considered a "railroad" town, it actually was not until 1900, almost thirteen years after the line to California was completed, and more than seventeen years since A.P. Talent had first laid out lots on the site, that Talent was given a railroad depot.³⁰ In 1899, Medford had outgrown its old depot building and the city's increased volume demanded a new structure. Talent seized

²⁹ Medford, for example, was selected as the main railroad station, almost entirely due to the generous lands offered the line by Messrs. Beekman, Phipps, Broback and Mingus, who stood to make huge profits by turning farmland into city lots surrounding the new depot.

³⁰ It does appear possible that prior to the actual depot development that Talent had been served by some type of less formal station, apparently installed in the mid-1890s if not earlier.

the opportunity for a “ready-made” building and Medford’s old depot was simply shipped south by the Southern Pacific. A Medford paper reported:

The old Southern Pacific depot at this place is now only a memory. It was placed on three flat cars Sunday and Monday and yesterday [and] was taken to Talent where it will resume its work as a station house. (*Medford Mail*, 15-June-1900, 5:3)³¹

I.3.5. A Growing Community, 1900-1912

As mentioned earlier, orchard development in the Talent vicinity dates from the initial settlement period of the mid-1850s. E.K. Anderson’s orchard, located northwest of the study area, was one of the first attempts at orchard production in the Rogue River Valley. “Grandfather had foresight, planting fields of grain and orchards of apples, peaches, and pears, also nut trees, 65 acres in all! For many years this was the largest orchard in Southern Oregon.(Vore 1977:22)

By the late 1880s, a box factory had been established in Talent, providing the surrounding agricultural producers with packaging for their output. Other industries, including lumber and mining, continued to be located in the surrounding areas, especially up Wagner Creek, enabling the service and retail businesses of Talent to prosper. Blacksmiths, general merchandise, shoemakers, and hardware companies were all apparently in operation in Talent by the early 1890s.

Throughout the 1890s, with the continued growth of the orchard industry in the valley, the fertile land surrounding Talent increasingly was shifted to orchard production. Land that in early years had produced wheat was now converted to more profitable fruit and vegetables as the new transportation opportunity of the railroad provided area farmers with access to larger markets. Melons, tomatoes, and truck vegetables such as celery and lettuce were all grown in commercial quantities in the Talent vicinity. This expanding economy naturally increased Talent’s position as the local service center, a position considerably strengthened after 1900 with the arrival of the depot building.

³¹ Lest there be any confusion for the modern reader by the term “station house,” an article published in the *Ashland Tidings*, 13-June-1899 reported “Talent’s people are hopeful of getting a side track and depot facilities from the S.P. Co. soon, a report being in circulation that [the] Medford Depot building . . . will be moved to Talent.” This clearly indicates the lack of a depot facility in Talent. Other articles relate Talent’s interest in obtaining the obsolete Medford depot to solve its long-standing need.

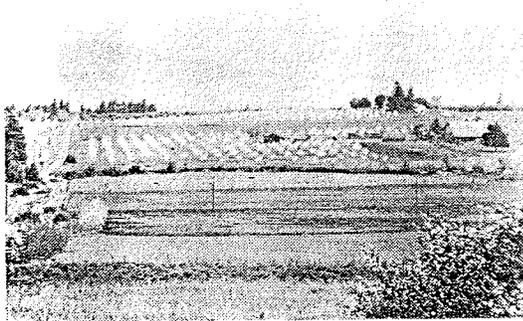


Photo 1.4 Orchard View, v. Talent, (SOHS #9340)

While peaches, cherries, prunes and other crops were present in the area, it was the apple and pear that proved the most viable market. “. . . Since 1902 there have been about 109,500 pear trees set out in [Jackson] county, that being about 77 percent of the total number of pear trees in the valley.” In 1908, pears accounted for 2189 acres in Jackson County. Apples, however, still

dominated with almost 6000 acres in production. (Lewis et al, 1908:5) After the turn of the century, at least one packing plant was operating in Talent, preparing the region’s output for transportation.

M.L. Pellet’s packing house is now teeming with life and incidentally, with eighteen beautiful girls who are packing Oregon pears for eastern markets. (*Medford Mail*, 28-August-1903, 6:4)

M.L. Pellet, the Talent orchardist, finished his apple picking Thursday of this week. He has employed in picking 27 men and will have fully 13 carloads of fruit. This amount of fruit at the prices paid this season will bring him over \$11,000. (*Medford Mail*, 23-Oct-1903, 4:4)

Orchard development continued to spur the valley, and Talent’s growth throughout the early years of the 20th century. The industry’s dominance reached a fever pitch during the period of 1909-1912, long dubbed the Rogue Valley’s “Orchard Boom.” These years were an era of unparalleled growth in population with newcomers, as numerous wealthy easterners streamed into the valley and entered the orchard industry. Talent, like other valley communities, saw dramatically increased development in the orchard industry, as well as the construction of new housing and commercial buildings to accommodate the new arrivals.

. . . it hasn’t been in the minds of the majority that the smaller towns would figure much in the advancement of the valley, but such is not the case. Talent’s fruits have been sent all over the world, helping to gain prestige for the valley. Talent berries and peaches bring the highest market prices in Portland; the apples and pears bring the fancy prices in New York and

London; Talent took the prize at the world's fair in Seattle last year. . .(AT,
23-June-1910, 1:7)

In the middle of the orchard boom, Talent began the process of incorporation and formally organizing itself into a self-governing community. In September 1910 a group of local citizens petitioned the Jackson County Court for recognition. At the Court's direction, an election was held on 5-October-1910 for qualified voters within the boundaries of the proposed city and, by a vote of 46 for and 24 against, the "Town of Talent" was formally established. V.A. Dunlap was the first mayor with Marion Tryor, A. Alford, Dr. D. Forbes, T.J. Bell, John Lacy, and C.W. Wolters elected as Aldermen. The population of the community was estimated at 250 people.

These were heady years in the Rogue River Valley, with construction, population and wealth at all-time highs.³² Record prices were paid for agricultural land as wealthy individuals sought to acquire or assemble large orchard tracts. County-wide, farm land increased in value over 475% in the first decade of the century.(Chapman 1915:23) Talent was no exception to this trend, as new houses and business structures were rapidly developed throughout the community, especially in the business district that ran along what are now Talent and Wagner streets. It was in this vicinity that a major fire broke out in late January 1911, destroying much of the town's core commercial area. The newly incorporated city, however was undaunted. Under the headline "Talent Rises From Its Ashes," one local paper reported:

Showing the same spirit that caused San Francisco to rise out it ashes and present to the world a city more beautiful and substantial because of its devastation, the little city of Talent. . .is rapidly rehabilitating itself and within the next few months will have implanted itself more firmly on the map that it ever was before. . .(MMT, 28-February-1911, 6:2)

The combination of prosperity, increased population, and the need created by the fire resulted in the immediate re-building of the downtown. With the prosperity engendered by the Orchard boom, and looking toward a bright future, many of the new structures that were constructed of fire-proof materials, either brick or concrete. As far as can be determined, neither material had been used in Talent previously. Construction of a new Talent State Bank, burned in the blaze, began almost immediately after the fire. New buildings for both the Methodist and Christian churches, as well as frame residences and small business structures were all constructed in Talent in the year following the fire. At the same time, the massive brick high school, planned before the fire, was beginning to take shape.

³² An oft-cited statistic documents that Medford, with a 392% percent increase in population, was the second fastest growing incorporated city in the United States between 1900 and 1910. Talent, whose population was estimated at 500 in 1912 had thus *doubled* in size in the two years since incorporation.

. . .the erection of this fine edifice will be the climax of building operations at Talent [for] the present year. (*AT*, 16-March-1911, 1:2)

In January 1912, Talent looked forward to a prosperous year. In a booster-type description published in the special New Years' Day magazine of a Medford paper, the town proclaimed itself "the Garden Spot of the Valley" and boasted of its progress and opportunity.³³ Unfortunately, the rapid increase in orchard production, coupled with the highly variable availability of water, combined to dampen the valley's "boom" by 1913.

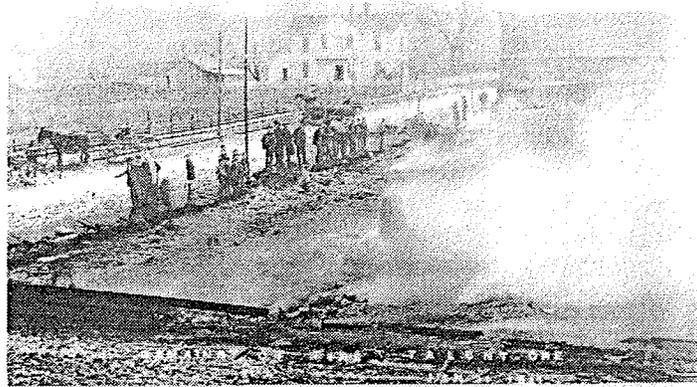


Photo 1.5 Talent Fire, 31-January-1911 (SOHS #12933)

Following its incorporation the Town of Talent embarked on an era of civic improvement. A reliable municipal water supply was a top priority and the town had contracted for the construction of reservoirs and a distribution system in early 1912. New distribution systems for both gas and electricity, provided by private enterprise, were also constructed and available to Talent residents shortly after incorporation.

Our sister town of Talent is certainly forging to the front in the way of public works. . .some time ago \$20,000 in bonds was voted for a municipal waterworks system. A well has been put down and cemented and the work of laying the mains. . .is now in progress. The village is also putting in a street-lighting system. They have contracted with the Oregon-California

³³ See *MMT* 1-January-1912, Special Section, 4:1-8.

Power Company [sic] for the installation of 16 40-candlepower [street] lamps. (*AT* 25-November-1912, 8:3-7)³⁴

The street lights were installed as part of a city beautification effort that also included sidewalks and the paving of selected streets. Private initiative in Talent also was on the rise as new organizations such as the Talent Athletic Club and the Talent Commercial Club were established by mid-1913.³⁵

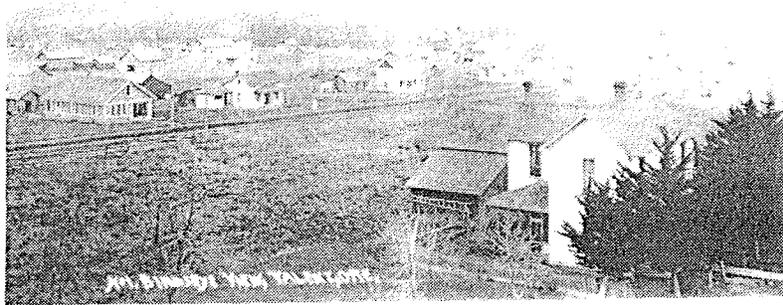


Photo 1.6 Birdseye View from School Tower, Looking NE, c.1912-3, (from Richard Lohr Collection)

Talent's long-standing reputation as a progressive area, expounding concepts that today would be considered "liberal" or even "New Age," continued to be in evidence in the years immediately following incorporation.³⁶ In early 1912, W.H. Breese, serving as chair

³⁴ The power utility is correctly known as the California-Oregon Power Company, universally referred to as "Copco."

³⁵ See *Ashland Tidings*. 1-January-1913 3:2 and 6-March-1913, 3:3. During this period the *Tidings* published a special section devoted exclusively to its "sister" town under the banner "Talent Tidings."

³⁶ Examples of Talent's distinctive views include John Beeson's notable stand on the treatment of Indians, and the various spiritual movements that characterized the area. This trend is particularly evident in the *Diary of W.J. Dean* and the discussions held at the Universal Mental Liberty Hall. (See Atwood: 1976:107:113). Of note architecturally, is the fact that Welborn Beeson built what is arguably the only Octagon House ever constructed in southern Oregon. Octagon houses, as promoted by "Squire" Orson Fowler in his widely published *A Home for All*, (1853) were considered the most naturally satisfying dwelling form and promoted for their medicinal and spiritual properties as well as their aesthetic and structural features.

of the Town Council, was elevated to the position of mayor, an office he was re-elected to later that year.

[Talent] claims the distinction of being one of the few towns in the state with a socialist mayor, William H. Breese getting all but one of the votes cast. (5-December-1912, 8:2)

Talent's progressive views were also evident in the election of Miss Leta Luke as the city's recorder, reportedly the ". . . first woman in the state to be officially elected to a municipal position since suffrage [was] obtained. . ." (AT, 5-December-1912, 8:2)³⁷ In 1913, Talent reinforced its progressive image by appointing Mrs. Minnie Vogeli to serve on its city council.

Talent, as one of the most progressive towns of progress Oregon, could be no less that up to the times. It was the first town in Oregon to elect a woman for recorder and it kept its lead by choosing Mrs. Minnie Vogeli as councilman[sic]. (AT, 6-February-1913, 3:4)

In 1914, the Talent School District, having vacated the frame building at the corner of I and Main streets for the modern brick school constructed in 1912-13, sold the older structure to the city for use as a city hall and community center. The wood frame building used by organizations as diverse as the Grange, the Good Government Congress, and the Boy Scouts, served as the focal point of the area, a role it continues in to this day.

Commercial expansion in Talent kept pace with the growing civic building program during the 1912-1913 period. Local concerns such as the Wagner Creek Nursery Co., located just north of Talent, and the model development at the Suncrest Orchard, east of the town, were major employers in the area both during and after the orchard "boom."³⁸ Other ventures aimed at diversifying the economy included continued mining and lumber projects, which although located up Wagner Creek or further west, engaged Talent's interest and the speculative capital of its business community. The Talent Coal Company, incorporated in 1913 was considered a potentially major industry in the vicinity. Spurred by the discovery of a vein "back of the Van Dyke place, equidistant from Ashland and

That Welborn Beeson elected to build in this rather revolutionary form, may be viewed as a telling commentary on his philosophy of life.

³⁷ This article erroneously referred to Miss Luke being elected to the position of "post mistress," an political appointment which at that time was held by her father, R.J. Luke.

³⁸ See "Nursery a Busy Place," (AT, 27-January-1913) and "Suncrest is a Fine Orchard," (AT, 10-February-1913)

Talent,” coal was viewed with high, if unwarranted optimism.³⁹ In-town commercial efforts of note include J.H. Lacy’s efforts to establish a quality hotel, the establishment of a cooperative creamery and the continued operation of the box factory and saw mill.

The commercial effort in Talent in the years following incorporation were dominated by the establishment of what would become known as the Bagley Canning Company. Located on a large open parcel north of the railroad depot, the company was opened in the summer of 1912 by Dr. W.R. Bagley, formerly of Duluth, Minnesota.

The plant, which cost nearly \$10,000 in addition the site, which was donated by the citizens of Talent, . . . is an outgrowth of a small plant started last year by Dr. Bagley at his ranch, northwest of Talent. (*AT* -26-September-1912, 3:3)

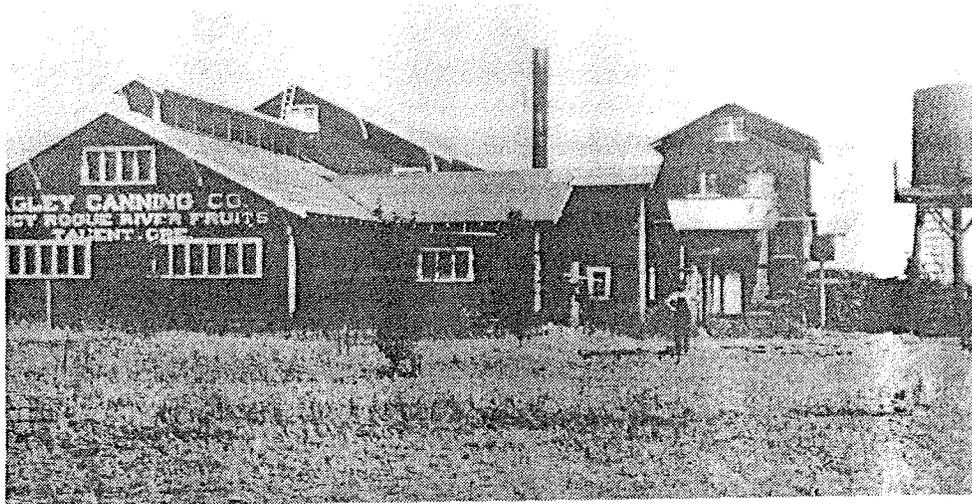


Photo 1.7 Bagley Canning Company, Talent, c. 1915 (Bagley Family Collection)

With the end of the orchard boom, a downturn that would dramatically impact development in the larger communities of Medford and Ashland during the middle years of the 1910-1920 decade, Talent apparently continued to develop, albeit in a modest way. In 1915 a state almanac succinctly characterized the community with the following:

Talent — Altitude 1,657 feet. Population 500. On Bear Creek. On main line of Southern Pacific railroad, midway between Ashland and Medford. Fruit growing and farming. Peaches, apples and berries. Dairying being developed. Creamery. Cannery. Box Factory. Saw mill. Municipal water works. Paved streets. Sulfur mineral springs

³⁹ See “The Talent Coal Company,” (*AT*, 23-January-1913). Attempts to mine coal in the Talent area were also mentioned as early as 1893 in various issues of the *Talent News*.

near. Jackson County Farm and Southern Oregon Experimental Station one mile. High and graded public school. Baptist, Christian, Dunkard and Methodist churches. I.O.O.F., Rebekah, Woodmen and Royal Neighbors lodges. Band, 24 pieces. Commercial Club. Bank; capital and surplus, \$21,000; deposits \$58,000. (Chapman 1915:166)

1.3.6. The Pacific Highway

By 1913, the Rogue River valley's primary north-south transportation corridor, so integral a part of the Talent area's development since the days of the Applegate Trail, provided the basic route for the Rogue Valley's first modern road: The Pacific Highway. "The Pacific Highway is the most ambitious road in the history of the continent and already the roadway has been traversed by automobiles for a continuous length of more than 6,000 miles from Hazelton, in Central British Columbia, south to the city of Mexico." (Jackson County 1913:36) In 1911 county voters passed a \$1.5 million dollar bond to fund the construction of "good roads" and eventually Jackson became the first county along the Pacific Highway to offer continuous paved surface for its entire length. Throughout the 1910-1920 period, the county remained at the forefront of the "good roads" movement as local business and political leaders were quick to recognize both the financial benefits of improving accessibility to the surrounding regions as well as the necessity of connecting the rural communities with the larger cities of Medford and Ashland



Photo 1.8 Pacific Highway, South of Talent c. 1920 (SOHS #9348)

With growing popularity and increased affordability, automobile ownership grew dramatically in the years following 1910.⁴⁰ Accordingly, as use of the Pacific Highway rose, its presence again demonstrated Talent's advantageous location. Originally, settlers, or "colonists" as they were called during the period, provided the major focus of marketing efforts on the part of Rogue Valley communities and the railroad. Soon, however, the automobile opened an entirely new class of potential income; tourists.

Talent is situated about half-way between Medford and Ashland on the Pacific Highway and the Southern Pacific railway, and all tourists or others passing through [the] Rogue River Valley must pass through it. (*MMT* 1-January-1912)

"Automobiling" in the early years of this century was fun and adventuresome, often to a point that overwhelmed the practical advantages of the machines in the popular mind. Families and young people took to "motoring" along the newly laid out highways both for short day trips as well as extended vacations.

There was the charm of novelty, the tang of danger, the irresistible attraction of uncertainty, the tempting call of the open road, and, if you got there and back—the supreme reward of accomplishment. (Partridge 1952:IX)

The attraction of motoring in the Talent area is well-documented in the diaries of W.J. Dean, a 65-year old pioneer resident of the Wagner creek drainage. Dean, after much debate, "joined the great Ford army" in late September 1915. After constructing an "auto stable," he busied himself with daily trips to Phoenix, Ashland, Medford and "T." [Talent] for both supplies and recreation. A typical entry from the period is this one, dated October 5, 1915:

Took an auto ride to Bybee bridge. . . picnicked at bridge. Nice ride. Car cranked all right this morning. Am getting myself broke in little by little. Lots of things about a car to learn and then put in practice. Simply guiding or driving the car under favorable condition is the simplest part.⁴¹

In Talent, the Pacific Highway essentially followed the traditional route from Ashland north to Talent, and then on to Phoenix and Medford. The renewed importance of the old stage route helped shift the focus of the town's central business area away from Wagner

⁴⁰ The automobile's rapid acceptance is demonstrated by the fact that in 1910 Oregon had 2,493 registered automobiles. Five years later there were 23,585, an increase of over 800%, and by the end of the decade [1920] registration topped 103,000.

⁴¹ All quotations are taken from page 16 of the *Diary of W.J. Dean, 1912-1919*, as transcribed by Ben Truwe and in the collection of the Talent Historical Society.

street, and the railroad, toward what is now Talent Avenue.⁴² Older businesses along this route gradually shifted their emphasis toward the automobile traffic soon streaming outside their front doors. Blacksmiths, always plentiful in Talent to service the surrounding agricultural areas, here as elsewhere added the repair of the new mechanical contraptions to their offerings. And, while it is not documented when the first gasoline became available in Talent, it may be assumed that some enterprising merchant soon installed a pump at curbside to meet the new demand.

Following the growth associated with the orchard boom, the presence of the Pacific Highway and the new business that it brought likely helped Talent to maintain a comparatively stable economy during the late 1910s and early 1920s. In 1919, Talent remained confident in its future. “. . . People passing thru do not see all that is going on in and around Talent. . . There is no boom reported. . . but a steady growth.” (*AT*, 9-May-1919, 1:1) Despite that assessment, Talent’s population dropped almost 50% during the decade, from an estimated 500 in 1912 to 278 eight years later.

1.3.8. The Talent Irrigation District

The dramatic growth of the orchard industry, and its equally dramatic decline, convinced many localities in the Rogue River valley of the need for stable water for irrigation. Numerous water districts were formed in the 1910s with the goal of harnessing and collecting the run-off of mountain streams to irrigate the lands of the valley floor.

Irrigation in the Talent vicinity, one of the region’s first agricultural areas, dated to the earliest pioneer settlers. Jacob Wagner is generally credited as one of the first to irrigate land for agricultural purposes in the Rogue River Valley and other Talent area farmers enjoy water claims dating to the early 1850s.⁴³ As early as 1904 farmers in the vicinity were planning for an extensive irrigation project to supply their farms and orchards. Led by M.L. Pellet, the \$80,000 estimated cost of the project apparently was more than the farmers could afford and thus it was never built.⁴⁴

In 1911, a second effort, led by a group of San Francisco investors, also looked at the formation of an irrigation district to supply the Talent area. This project also apparently came to naught. Finally, in May 1916, local landowners voted 105 to 11 to form the Ashland-Talent Irrigation district, described at the time as “one of the most important actions which has been recorded by voters of this part of the country and means the

⁴² Commercial ventures, to some degree, had long been present on the old route however the town, platted in anticipation of a depot, originally developed commercial areas more oriented toward the railroad than the old stage road.

⁴³ See Yvonne Keith, *A History of the Original Talent Irrigation District*, August 1960. A monument to Wagner’s efforts is located at the intersection of Rapp and Wagner Creek roads.

⁴⁴ See “New Irrigation Project,” *Medford Mail*, 15-January-1904, 1:1.

beginning of a project which will treble the productive power of acreage in the district.” (*AT*, 22-May-1916) In 1917 land owners voted for a \$600,000 bond to finance the project and in 1919 construction began on what had become known as the Talent Irrigation District, or TID.

Dams were built on Emigrant Creek and at Hyatt Prairie Lake, both in the mountains east of Ashland and an extensive system of laterals and canals was developed to supply the district’s holdings. “With the completion of the laterals for the water season of 1928, the majority of the construction by the Talent Irrigation District was completed.”(Keith 1960:10)

The construction of the project and the formation of TID strengthened the role of agriculture in the areas surrounding Talent. While the District struggled financially through its early years, and required substantial reorganization in 1933, the availability of a stable, and eventually affordable, water supply remains a major factor in the still prominent role of agriculture in the region.

1.3.9. Between the Wars

The decade of the 1920s in Talent, as in all of Jackson County, was one of little building activity. Like most of the cities in the valley, Talent was faced with a declining population. Business and residential needs were easily accommodated by the over-development of the previous decade. And, despite the efforts at irrigation and the continuing progress of TID to enhance the viability of the surrounding agricultural communities, Talent was more and more relegated to secondary status from a commercial standpoint as local stores and services were closed, supplanted by those Medford and Ashland.

Exacerbating Talent’s commercial decline, automobile and transportation connections continued to improve. By 1927, the Pacific Highway was almost entirely paved for a distance of over 3000 miles, making it the longest paved roadway in the world according to one report. “Soon after leaving Jackson Hot Springs, the highway winds past farms and orchards until Talent, a thriving community, is reached.”(*MMT*, 2-January-1927)

Despite this claim, little documentation exists to support a description of Talent as “thriving” to any degree in the late 1920s. Numerous events, however, would logically lead to a contrary conclusion. In 1924, the Bagley Canning Company relocated to Ashland. Opened in 1912, on land supplied by the town, the canning company had provided both an important service for local orchardists and seasonal jobs for the community. Its closure, and move to Ashland, dramatically reduced what today would be

called Talent's "industrial base."⁴⁵ Another blow occurred in 1927 when the assets of the local financial institution, the Talent State Bank, were purchased by the First National Bank of Ashland and Talent's only bank closed its doors.

It was pointed out by officers of both banks that comparative ease in reaching the larger centers had done much to take away from the small communities a major portion of the business that had been theirs by right of location in the past. (AT, 15-December-1927, 1:8)

By the early 1930s the Depression had apparently hit Talent hard. The Rev. Joseph Pope, who served as the minister of the Talent Methodist Church from 1931-1932 would later comment that times were so bad that when local fruit growers sent car loads of fruit to market, the railroad company would often write them after they were sold to say that growers still owed on the freight costs.⁴⁶ In such an economy, the irrigation district, completed only a few years prior, teetered on financial ruin.

In the midst of this continued decline, Talent was presented with its most serious threat to date when the Oregon State Highway Department proposed a realignment that would move the Pacific Highway from the center of the business community, effectively stranding Talent off the main road. While in support of the much-needed infusion of Federal dollars and jobs road work might provide, Talent was vocal in its opposition to the realignment plan.

Talent would be left off the direct route by a little more than a city block and a protest signed by practically every citizen of [the town] was filed at the meeting this morning. (AT, 12-January-1934, 1:2)

Talent was successful in gaining the support of both Ashland and the Jackson County Court for a resolution presented to the State that encouraged the "straightening" of the existing route through the town. This resolution stated, in part, opposition to any route that would ". . . place the Pacific Highway outside of the business area of Talent [and] would unquestionably ruin the business interests of Talent." (AT, 16-January-1933, 1:2.) This effort partially succeeded as the decision on the downtown Talent segment was delayed "for several years."

Although temporarily retaining its connection to the Pacific Highway, the new prominence of the automobile had reduced Talent's need for a local rail connection. With the Bagley Canning Company having closed, as well as the assumed reduced production of the local saw mills, the long-sought depot had become expendable. As early as 1924 the Depot

⁴⁵ Mary and Bill Bagley, personal communication with the Author, 24-March-1994. See also Bonnie Delsman, "Dr. Bagley Built the First Cannery," *Ashland Daily Tidings[ADT]*, 3-June-1967, 7:1-8.

⁴⁶ as quoted in Foster, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Talent*, 1961.

was operated only seasonally, presumably in conjunction with the growing season. In June of that year a proposal to abandon the depot permanently was dropped, much to Talent's relief.⁴⁷ The opening of the Natron Cut-off in 1927, which shifted the main route of the Southern Pacific to Klamath Falls, thereby avoiding the steep grade of the Siskiyou, severely impacted the rail volume through the Rogue Valley. By 1935 the need for a depot at Talent had clearly ended and the building was razed by D.G. Newland of Medford for scrap.

Today residents regret the razing of the landmark, which although it has been some time since it was used as a shipping or ticket office, has made a good place for the town's idle to loaf in the sunshine and for small boys to play marbles.⁴⁸

Various civic improvements, funded by P.W.A. or S.E.R.A. grants from the Federal government, provided some high spots for Talent during the 1930s. In May 1931, the city sought to ease its continuing water shortage through the acquisition of a second municipal well on land owned by Fred Rapp.⁴⁹ With the help of a \$20,000 PWA grant, Talent also began the construction of its first municipal sewer line in early 1936. Despite this progress, however, perhaps the best indication of Talent's economy in the 1930s was a resolution passed by the Town Council in March 1933 that authorized the posting of signs to keep children from destroying property at the many vacant houses in the community.⁵⁰

The move to relocate the Pacific Highway outside of the central business district was again raised in June 1936. Once again Talent merchants and civic leaders, supported by Ashland and the Jackson County Commissioners, opposed the move and presented various options to straighten the existing route.⁵¹ This time, however, the State Highway Commission had adopted a policy that looked at the advantages to the general public rather than any particular locality and the Talent's opposition went for naught. Ray Schumacher, president of the Talent Chamber of Commerce and publisher of a small dispatch called *Ray's News Flashes* reported;

Talent, no doubt, will feel the effect of this decision, but still we will not be extinct in a few years as many people suspect. Talent may be better off in time to come as this may serve to help this community think of the natural resources and start now to develop into the community we should be. (ADT 3-August-1936, 1:5)

⁴⁷ See *MMT* 30-May-1924 2nd, 7:6 and 6-June-1924, 6:4

⁴⁸ Unidentified Newspaper Clipping, "Talent, Or. to Miss Old Depot," 31-March-1935, W.A. Thomas Collection, Southern Oregon Historical Society Collection, Medford.

⁴⁹ Talent Council Minutes, 15-May-1931.

⁵⁰ Talent Council Minutes, 7-March-1933.

⁵¹ See, for example, "Ashland to Aid Talent in Highway Appeal," *ADT*, 16-June-1936, 1:1.

Construction of the bypass, located approximately one block east of “The Old Highway” was apparently completed by early 1938, leaving Talent’s commercial district off the main north-south route through the Rogue River Valley for the first time since the 1850s. New businesses, predominately those relating to the highway trade such as tourist cabins, and later motels, developed along the new corridor. The north entrance to town, where the old and new route joined, became known as “Talent Junction,” a location that has been the site of a series of gas stations for over sixty years.

I.3.10. A “City” — Talent in the Post-WWII Era

In 1941, Talent likely benefited from the wave of pre-war spending that swept Jackson County as war in Europe became eminent. The military decision to build a huge Army cantonment in the Agate Desert, east of Medford, resulted in a huge influx of first construction, and then uniformed, personnel that quickly overwhelmed any lingering effects of the depression in southern Oregon. Talent’s vacant houses, as virtually every structure in the valley, were all soon rented. The feared move of the Pacific Highway had not had dire impact on the commercial district. While reduced in scope and variety, the small businesses on Talent Avenue continued to provide basic services for the community and surrounding areas.

As the end of World War II approached, Talent looked toward its future. In 1944, the continual need for a larger water supply was again discussed and plans were made for construction of a “reserve storage system to supply adequate water for the growing population of the town.”(Council Minutes, 4-January-1944) In June, Talent joined the League of Oregon Cities. With the war’s end, new developments and additions greatly expanded the community’s size and the economy gradually shifted away from the agriculture that had so dominated the first half of the century. Talent’s population swelled by 90%, reaching 739 in the 1950 census.

By 1958 the original town charter had become dated. City attorneys Neff and Frohnmayer of Medford, drafted a new charter that was accepted by vote that same year. Primarily designed to clarify city functions and organization, Chapter 1, Section 2 of the new charter declared:

The city in Jackson County, Oregon now known as the “Town of Talent” shall continue to be a municipal corporation but after this charter takes effect shall be known as the “City of Talent.”

Prosperity and growth continued throughout the 1960s. New, larger scale, commercial ventures replaced earlier structures and uses. The trend toward subdivision development, multiple residential tracts built by a single entity, that had begun after the war accelerated. A new housing type, mobile home parks, grew in popularity, creating over 100 spaces in

Talent during the 1960s and another 270 in the 1970s.⁵² Talent's population passed the 1000 mark in 1963 and the city again looked toward improving its water supply to meet demands.⁵³

By 1970, Talent's population rose to 2620, an increase of over 300% in the decade. "The real growth came to the area after the completion of Interstate 5 in 1963."(Doerter, 1978:5) The freeway, the most recent in the series of north-south corridors, again provided Talent with improved access to Medford and Ashland. Talent's affordable housing and quality of life provided attractive opportunities for young families, artists, and retirees. Talent's growth, and its attractiveness for residential development, continued throughout the 1980s, as it does at this writing.

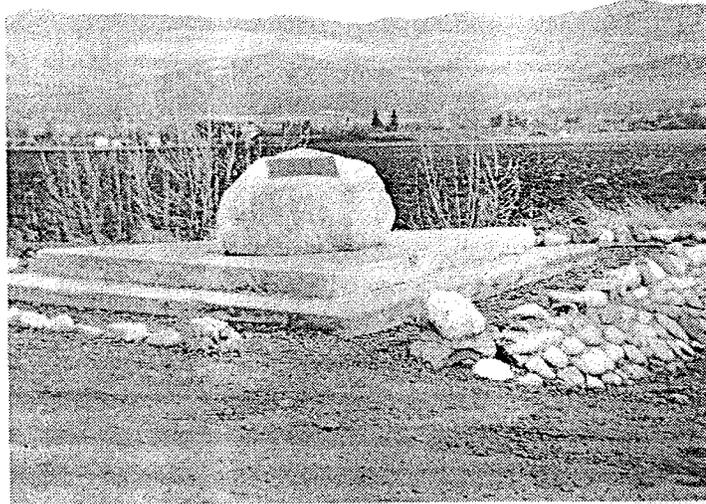


Photo 1.9 Wagner Creek & Rapp Road, Looking NW, 1973 (SOHS # 1082)

⁵² David Doerter, *Historical Element Data*, Talent Comprehensive Plan, 1978.

⁵³ "Ashland Salutes Her Neighbor, the City of Talent." *AT*, 25-October-1963, 16:1-8.

I.4. SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUALS

ANDERSON, E.K.

Born in 1826 and one of the earliest settlers to arrive in the Rogue River Valley, Eli Knighton Anderson established a homestead on Anderson Creek, northwest of modern-day Talent, in 1852. In conjunction with his brother Firman who had an adjacent homestead, Anderson planted extensive orchards, among the first commercial orchards in the valley. He later engaged in mining and mercantile endeavors in addition to agriculture. Remaining on the family ranch until 1909, Anderson moved to Ashland and died there in 1912. "He was a vigorous citizen and a man of much character. . .his success in life has been marked by his aggressiveness in surmounting obstacles."⁵⁴

BAGLEY, DR. W. R.

A Minnesota-born surgeon, Dr. Bagley moved to southern Oregon for health reasons in 1909 and settled on a fruit ranch south of the community of Talent. "His attention was attracted to the need of some method of properly marketing the products of his own and neighbors' ranches, besides that of shipping fresh fruit." Beginning with a small plant on the ranch, by 1912 Bagley established the Bagley Canning Company near the railroad tracks in Talent.⁵⁵

BEESON, JOHN

Born in Lincolnshire, England in 1803, John Beeson migrated to Oregon with his family in 1853 from LaSalle County, Illinois. Settling on Wagner Creek, Beeson's views on his neighbors' treatment of the Indians, and his reporting of abuses in the eastern press led to his being run out of the county under fear for his life in 1856. Leaving his wife and family, he was not to return until 1887. He died two years later, on April 21, 1889 and is buried in Stearns Cemetery. "John Beeson was a man of more than ordinary ability and enjoyed the respect and friendship of prominent philanthropists of his time, who whom he labored for the elevation of the whole human family, and particularly the American Indian."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ *AT*, 16-March-1912

⁵⁵ [Dr. W.R. Bagley] *Start of the Bagley Canning Company*, Privately Printed, 1948.

⁵⁶ Southern Oregon Pioneer Association Records, "Resolutions on the Deaths of Members," Vol. I, 142-143.

BEESON, WELBORN

Born in LaSalle County, Illinois on 23-July-1836, Welborn Beeson was the only son of John and Ann Beeson [see previous] and arrived Jackson County with his parents in 1853, settling near Talent. Forced to provide for his mother following his father's absence, Welborn was a resourceful and well-respected individual, despite the local suspicion directed toward his parent. He operated a farm on the family claim, worked various odd construction jobs and, as a self-trained surveyor, was active in the development of both Talent and much of the surrounding area. A well-read and literate man, Welborn began keeping a journal at age 15 and continued almost daily for the rest of life, a period of some forty years, thereby creating an invaluable resource toward our understanding of early southern Oregon history. Never a well individual, Beeson died suddenly in April 1893.

BREESE, WILLIAM H.

Born in Germany and trained as an attorney, Breese moved to Talent from Phoenix in 1883 and purchased a tract of land along the old stage road. He worked as a blacksmith and later operated Evergreen Gardens, apparently growing truck crops for local distribution. Active politically, Breese ran for state office on the Populist ticket in 1892. Following a brief sojourn to Costa Rica, he returned to Talent and following incorporation, as a member of the Socialist Party he served as Talent's mayor from 1912 through 1919. He remained active in local politics until his death in May 1933.

DEAN, W.J.

Wagner Creek resident, Dean was apparently engaged in farming. A noted "spiritualist" and frequent speaker at the UML Hall. In later life Dean kept a diary, portions of which [1912-1919] survive. No specific biographical information was located.

DUNLAP, V.A.

A merchant, Dunlap was instrumental in the 1910 movement toward incorporation and served as Talent's first mayor.

HOLTON, JOHN

According to Walling's history, Holton "lives on Wagner Creek, post office is Talent. A Farmer, born in Westminster Vt. on July 6 1817, came to state and county in 1853, married on 2-April 1848 to Mrs. Hannah C. Chandler.

PELLET, M. L.

Early area orchardist and packing house owner, Pellet was operating in the Talent area as early as 1902. He lead an unsuccessful attempt to establish an irrigation district in 1904. He apparently left Talent prior to boom 1909-1912 and no other information regarding his activities was located.

ROBISON, EDWARD

Descendent of Samuel Robison, "Eddie" Robison was the publisher, and editor of the *Talent News*, and informative and amusing publication that covered the events of the Talent and Wagner Creek areas from 1892 to 1894.

ROBISON, SAMUEL

An early pioneer, Robison lived on Wagner Creek and was a farmer. "Came to state and county in 1853 was married April 13, 1864 to Hannah E. Barneburg."

ROCKEFELLOW, ALBERT

Member of the 1853 emigrant party that arrived in Talent in the midst of the Rogue River Indian uprising, Rockefeller established a home near Wagner's original claim. Members of the family remained prominent in the area throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Later the family apparently relocated to Ashland.

ROOT, HORACE

Born in New York in 1817, Root migrated west to California in 1849 and moved to Oregon in 1861, ". . . settling on a rich and extensive ranch at Wagner Creek" a portion of the original Jacob Wagner claim. Root dedicated a portion of his property to the Wagner Creek Baptist Church, of which he was an early member, and ". . . soon after ward the present meeting house erected, that also being largely due to his exertions." In 1880 Root sold much of his property to A.P. Talent, providing the basis for the community. After moving to Ashland, Root died in August 1890.⁵⁷

SHERMAN, S.

Blacksmith and early resident, Sherman was apparently injured during the Civil War and moved to Talent in the late 1870s, establishing his shop and remaining active in local politics. He played a major role in the early attempts to secure a depot for Talent in the late 1880s.

⁵⁷ "Death of a Pioneer," *AT* 29-August-1890.

TALENT, A.P.

Born in Tennessee in 1836, Aaron Patton Talent migrated to Oregon in 1875 and settled in the Wagner Creek area. Working as a carpenter, and later opening a store, he purchased much of the original Wagner homestead and subdivided it into lots, creating the community that bears his name. Leaving the area for Turner, Oregon in 1890, Talent moved to Medford in 1902 and lived there until his death in May 1913.

TERRILL, H. J. [JAY]

Horace Jefferson[Jay] Terrill was born in Brownsboro, Oregon in 1882 and moved to Talent at age five. He was active in local politics and for some twenty years held the office of city recorder, playing a prominent role in the creation of city government

Terrill also was active on the local school board and at the time of his death was Talent's postmaster.⁵⁸

TRYER, MARION

After moving from Medford, Tryer [also spelled Tryor] served as one of Talent's earliest mayor's prior to resigning to avoid a conflict in competing for city business. Tryor ran a hardware store, located on what is now Talent Avenue, that was a long-standing Talent establishment.

WAGNER, JACOB

Among the earliest settlers of the Rogue River Valley, Wagner established a donation land claim near the mouth of what is now Wagner Creek in Spring 1852. Rising to prominence following the construction of a "Fort" on his homestead, Wagner had moved to Ashland by 1858 and sold the homestead in 1865. In Ashland, Wagner became active in politics and various business pursuits. Most notable of the latter was his partnership in the Ashland Flour Mill, a venture he would soon control and manage. Later he became involved with early attempts to bottle area mineral water and ran a hotel at the Soda Springs, east of Ashland. Wagner died on January 4, 1900.

WOLTERS, C.W.

Born in Crescent City, California In 1861, Wolters moved to Jacksonville with his parents in 1862 and he lived in Ashland and Medford, establishing a successful business with his father by 1891. He moved to Talent 1901 and established a general merchandise business. Wolters established the Talent State Bank, housed in substantial concrete building he constructed following the devastating fire that destroyed Talent's commercial district in 1911. He remained a prominent civic leader until his sudden death at age 51 on 25-May-1913.(AT 30-May-1913)

⁵⁸ "Terrill Funeral Was Held Today," *ADT*, 2-January-1945, 4:5.

I.5. HISTORIC THEMES

No resource type can, or should, be studied in isolation. By comparing similar resource types, integrity, relative scarcity and the pattern of occurrence, reasoned determinations of significance within any given context can, to the greatest extent possible, be quantified and, if required, defended. The chronological and thematic categories developed for Oregon's Statewide Inventory of Historic Places [SIHP] therefore provide the organizational framework by which resources to be surveyed in Talent should be reassessed. This system, utilizes ten "Broad Themes" and eight chronological periods. These are;

THEMES:

1. Prehistory/Archaeology
2. Exploration & Fur Trade
3. Native American & Euro-American Relations
4. Settlement
5. Agriculture
6. Transportation & Communication
7. Commerce & Urban Development
8. Industry and Manufacturing
9. Government
10. Culture

CHRONOLOGICAL PERIODS:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. (1543)-1811 | "Exploration" |
| 2. 1812-1846 | "Fur Trade & Mission to the Indians" |
| 3. 1847-1865 | "Settlement, Statehood, & Steampower" |
| 4. 1866-1883 | "Industrial Growth and Development" |
| 5. 1884-1913 | "Railroads & Reform Movements" |
| 6. 1914-1940 | "The Motor Age" |
| 7. 1941-1967 | "War and the Postwar Era" |
| 8. 1968-Present | "Contemporary Era" |

Within the southern Oregon region, the temporal boundaries for individual periods of development may be somewhat different than the above however the SIHP system

provides the basic reference against which resources have been evaluated.⁵⁹ The temporal boundaries encompassed by this context span the period of initial settlement in the area to the early post WWII era of development. Please refer to Section 1.1 of this document for a discussion of the context boundaries.

Further, while early exploration and fur trading efforts, as well as the activities of various native peoples, likely did occur within the study area prior to 1851, no attempt has been made to document or identify resources related to those periods within the present study.⁶⁰ Few, if any, related resources are considered likely to exist.

Specific broad themes, the general types of resources associated with them, and potential additional resources that should prove significant where they survive with integrity within the Talent area are;

Settlement:

Resources that are associated with the initial settlement period in the Wagner Creek vicinity may include structures, landscapes and objects that were built prior to the founding of the Town of Talent or are strongly associated with individuals such as Jacob Wagner, E.K. Anderson, the Beesons, or others who early occupied this locale and played pivotal roles in the beginnings of the community. Typical resource types may include cabins, outposts, irrigation features, and early commemoratives as well as houses, barns, and other structures.

Agriculture

As the initial industrial base of the Talent area, agriculture provided the primary economy of the town throughout the historic period. Surviving resources such as barns, chicken coops, granaries, watertowers, cribs, corrals, and other objects or landscapes associated with the production of foodstuffs, or resources associated with individuals who played a prominent role in Talent's agricultural development may all relate the theme of Agriculture in the study area.

Transportation

As detailed in Section 1.4, the proximity of transportation routes to the Talent townsite have played a pivotal role in the development of the City of Talent. Resources related to

⁵⁹ Information on the SIHP thematic framework may be found in *Historic Preservation and the Oregon Land Use Planning Program*, SHPO (May 1990).

⁶⁰ For information on early exploration and fur trade activity in the Talent vicinity see Jeff LaLande, *First Over the Siskiyou*. (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1987).

the evolution of transportation systems, including both trails, stage routes, rail and automobile corridors are all potentially significant in the development of the area. Resource types, including bridges, railings, trestles, signage and structures, as well as the rights-of-way themselves, are all related to the theme of transportation.

Commerce

Commercial development within Talent, both in the establishment of retail and service facilities, complimented by manufacturing or industrial concerns, play a significant role in the establishment of Talent as an independent and distinct community. Resource types may include storefronts, offices, warehouses, eateries, manufacturing sites, storage facilities, and similar structures. Additionally, resources associated with individuals prominent in this aspect of the development of Talent, particularly in situations where no commercial structure survives, may have associative significance under the theme of commerce.

Government/Community

The establishment of the Town of Talent and resources that area associated with governmental and community services may be related by structures such as post offices, schools, community centers, religious institutions, in addition to city halls. Civic infrastructure improvements such as municipal wells, reservoirs, street furniture, commemorative markers, drinking fountains and other resources may also prove significant under the theme of government.

Culture

The theme of culture should generally be related by 19th and 20th century architecture, expected to consist almost entirely of small-scale, vernacular interpretations of prevalent idioms during the periods of development. Culture may also be related via resources associated with the themes of education, religion and social or fraternal movements.

1.6. RELATED STUDY UNITS

Given the inter-connection of transportation to the development of the study area, as the result of the city's proximity to the serial north-south transportation corridors that traversed the south Bear Creek Valley, the "Motor Age" [1914-1940] is considered a potentially significant era in the city's development. Talent's dramatic growth, and shift from an agricultural economy to one driven predominately by increased residential development falls under the both the "War and Post-War" and "Contemporary Era", periods as defined by the *Handbook to Historic Preservation Planning In Oregon*.

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PART II IDENTIFICATION

2.1. PREVIOUS SURVEYS

Although no comprehensive survey of historic and cultural resources in the City of Talent, Oregon has to date be undertaken, various efforts have identified selected resources of potential significance. The earliest located study of historic resources in Talent is a list prepared by local historian Kay Atwood and then-Mayor Granville Brittsan in February 1973. This document includes 28 sites and is reprinted verbatim as Appendix "A" to this context.¹

In the mid-1970s historian Stephen Dow Beckham, under contract to the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, documented a limited number of resources in Talent and its environs as a component of the first statewide survey. Later, in 1979-1980, the Jackson County Planning Department, also funded by the State Office, field surveyed the county, identifying a number of properties related to Talent's development.

Individual resources from both of the Beckham and county inventory projects, as well as other sources identified in more detail below, have been entered into the Statewide Inventory of Historic Places, maintained by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. At present this inventory contains twenty-one properties with Talent or "Talent vicinity" addresses although it must be recognized that many, if not most, of these are outside the city limits. SIHP-listed resources are documented in Table 2.1.

As will be noted on Table 2.1, at least two of the resources appear to be identical: the misnamed South Wagner Creek School and the correctly listed entry for the building under the name "Wagner Creek School."

As required under Oregon's State Land Use Planning System, Talent's Comprehensive Plan includes a historic element. This document, prepared in November 1978 and updated in January 1979 by then city planner David Doerter, identified a number of resources within the city limits and placed them within an evaluative framework based upon chronological periods relevant to Talent's development. These 40 resources are shown in Table 2.2.

¹ This early inventory was prepared in conjunction with a planned series of community histories undertaken for the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

Resource Name	Address	Date
Foss, Julius & Emma Louise Hse	6731 Wagner Crk Road	c.1888
Oregon Irrigation History Landmark	Rapp Rd & Wagner Creek	1952
Beeson, Emmette House	442 Beeson Ln	1893
Dean, W.J. Barn	Opp Wagner Crk	1892
Hale, Chester Hse	1574 Pioneer Rd	c.1910
Corliss, Guy Farm	1593 Pioneer Rd	c.1910
Beeson-Gleim House	6928 Wagner Crk Rd	c.1900
Fraizer, W.W. House	6062 Adams Rd	c.1925
So Wagner Crk School [sic]	8448 Wagner Crk Rd	1929
Rapp, Joseph & Martha Farm	225 W Rapp Rd [c.1880]	c.1920
Cochran-Knight House	7816 Wagner Crk Rd [c. 1912]	c.1915
Robison-Dean Hse	7681 Wagner Crk Rd	c.1875s
Nye, S A House	5626 South Pacific Hwy	c.1915
Wagner Crk School	8448 Wagner Crk Road	1930 ²
Booth, Otis, Hse Remodel	1.5. NE Talent	1929
Church/Brethern Cemetery	S Pacific Hwy	c.1888
Suncrest Orchard House	W Side, Suncrest Rd	c.1908
Suncrest Orchard Packing Hse	Suncrest Road	c.1925
Rapp, Joseph & Martha R. Barn #1	223 Rapp Road	c.1900
Rapp, Joseph & Martha R. Barn #2	225 Rapp Road	c.1900
Rapp, Joseph & Martha R. Barn #3	222 Rapp Road	c.1900

TABLE 2.1: "TALENT" STATE INVENTORY LISTED RESOURCES

² Completed in 1929 and designed by Claud Freeman, the Wagner Creek School is the located outside the city limits and thus beyond the scope of this study. It is the sole identified resource with a "Talent" address that is currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Historic Period	Property Name	Address
<i>Early History</i>	Old Baptist Church	303 E Main
	<i>RR Commercial</i>	Talent Hotel
<i>RR Residential</i>	Odd Fellows Hall	201 Talent Ave
	Talent School [City Hall]	Main and I street [204 E Main]
	Dunkard Cemetery	S. Pacific Hwy [outside city limits]
	"Talent" House	108 South Front
	"Rural Gothic" Hse	110 Wagner St.
	Simple Rural Gothic	113 N First
	Vernacular	208 N Main
	Farmhouse	
	Sm. Rural Gothic Hse	204 Talent Ave
	Queen Anne Hse 1	316 Wagner Creek Rd
	Queen Anne Hse 2	400 Wagner Creek Rd
	Barnes House [?]	402 Talent Ave
	Sm. Gothic Revival	102 I Street
	Classical Style Hse	104 I Street
	Gothic Revival Hse	102 Home St.
	Sm. Gothic Revival	100 Home St.
	Rural Gothic Hse	300 Bain
	Beeson House	Beeson Lane [outside city limits]
	Early Gothic Revival	300 John
	Knighten House	54 Talent Ave
	Bell House	104 So. I Street
	Van Auken [E Beeson]	6731 Wagner Crk [outside city limits]
	Sm. Italianate Hse	213 Talent Ave
	Waterman Hse	Front St.
	Van Dyke Hse	226 Talent Ave
	Ed Lunsford Hse	207 Talent Ave
	Sm. Gothic Revival	202 N Main
	Gothic Revival Hse	201 N Main
<i>Early Motor Age</i>	Wolters Store	215 East Wagner
	Hi-Style Bungalow	104 W Main
	Hi-Style Bungalow	200 W Main
	Old Christian Church	207 E Wagner St.
	Methodist-Episcopal	206 W Wagner St.
	Queen Anne Hse	400 Wagner Creed Road
	Double-size caboose	103 W Wagner
	Log House	Main Street
	Tudor Revival	?
	Old Shoe Store	109 So Second
Transitional Box Hse	104 So First	

**TABLE 2.2: HISTORIC ELEMENT, 1978-79 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
 (AFTER DOERTER)**

Following Doerter's fieldwork, much of this data was further refined and put into ordinance format. In June 1980, the Talent City Council adopted ordinance 423 which created a "Historic Sites, Buildings and District Overlay Zone" covering much of the original town plat. Article 13, Section 7 of that ordinance designated 16 resources within the city limits as "historic" resources to be regulated by the ordinance. Thirteen of the forty resources identified in the Historical Element of the Comprehensive Plan so designated along with three additional resources. It is not clear on what basis previously identified resources were included or excluded. The 16 designated historic resources identified in Section 7, along with current status, are:

Resource Name	Address	1994 Status
A.P. Talent House	108 S. Front Street	Extant
Talent School\Community Hall	204 E. Main Street	Extant
Baptist Church	303 E. Main Street	Extant
Talent Irrigation Marker	Corner Rapp & Wagner Crk Road	Extant
Site of Fort Wagner	226 Talent Ave	Extant [location not marked]
Talent Hotel	101 W. Main	Extant
Oddfellows Hall, Confectionery, Talent Cafe	201 Talent Ave	Extant
Knighten House	54 Talent Ave	Razed 1982
Boarding House	104 I Street	Extant
Rural Gothic House	300 Wagner Street	Extant
Rural Gothic House	110 E Wagner Street	Extant
Queen Anne House	316 Foss Road	Extant
Simple Queen Anne House	400 Wagner Creek Rd	Extant
Wolters Store	West corner I and Wagner	Razed 1990
Methodist Church	206 S First Street	Extant
Methodist Parsonage	204 S First Street	Extant

**TABLE 2.3 DESIGNATED HISTORIC RESOURCES, CITY OF TALENT LAND
 DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE ARTICLE 13 (7), ADOPTED 1980**

In short, there are currently fourteen individual historic or cultural resources, including one unmarked site and one monument, that are currently designated within the city limits of Talent, Oregon.

2.2. RESOURCE TYPES

Generally, built resources relating the previously listed “Themes” as discussed in Section 1.5, may be of a wide variety and each chronological period will, by definition, have its own peculiar related structures. The most common types for each of the major historic themes expected within Talent are listed below. For a complete listing of resource types and themes as delineated by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office please refer to the *Handbook for Historic Preservation Planning in Oregon*.

SETTLEMENT

Initial settlement-related buildings are typically small, one-room, dwellings of either round or hewn log, followed shortly by simple plank or balloon-framed one to one and one-half story volumes. Accessory structures such as barns, outhouses, chicken coops, watertowers and similar features relative to the development of homesteads also fall under the theme of “Settlement.” The only known early settlement-era dwelling to have been built within what is now the City of Talent is the Jacob Wagner cabin, surrounded by a palisade and known as “Fort Wagner,” the site of which is designated as a historic resource under the current city code.³ Other identified pioneer dwellings, predominately those associated with the Beeson and Anderson families, may occur in areas outside the geographical boundary of this study.

AGRICULTURE

In addition to barns and other features, relative to the establishment of commercial agriculture,” the theme of agriculture may be represented in the Talent area by manufacturing or shipping facilities, inspection or experimental stations, irrigation ditches, dams, canals, and similar features, as well as formerly farm- or ranch-based dwellings now located within the city limits. Historic accounts relating small-scale truck garden, dairy and egg production in the Talent area indicate a potential for outbuildings and similar structures accessory to residential uses within the older sections of the city that may represent this aspect of Talent’s agricultural development. The sole previously identified feature with direct connection to this theme is the Oregon Irrigation Landmark. It is assumed that some of the houses included in Table 2.2 will have some association with the agricultural theme as well.

³ See Section 1.3.1, page 3-4 for a discussion of Fort Wagner. The fort site, although not conclusively defined, is included in Article 13 (7) as shown in Table 2.3.

TRANSPORTATION

As a pivotal theme in the development of the City of Talent, built linear corridors such as the railroad right-of-way, the original route of the Pacific Highway and, to a lesser degree, the post-1938 reroute of that highway may all be of significance within the study area. Specific individual features, such as bridges, trestles, crossings, curbing, signage, and lighting may also merit study. Transportation-related resources, although often also falling within the theme of “Commerce” may also be present within the study area. These would include gas stations, repair facilities [both auto-specific and the earlier blacksmith shops they grew out of], sales lots, lodging and dining establishments serving the tourist trade, recreational facilities such as municipal “auto camps” and similar accommodations from all eras.

COMMERCE

Resources related to the theme of “Commerce” include stores, shops and other retail and wholesale locations for the distribution of goods, services, or other materials. Production facilities, including the manufacture, refinement, or creation of products *other than agricultural* are also considered under commerce. Previously identified resources potentially significant under the theme of commerce include the Talent Hotel, and the Oddfellows Hall/Confectionery/Talent Cafe building. Service facilities such as restaurants, bars, taverns, and professional offices also generally fall within the commerce theme unless more appropriately related to themes such as transportation [as in the case of early tourist facilities].

GOVERNMENT/COMMUNITY

The theme of government and community is related by surviving public structures such as the Talent School/Community Center building, as well as any surviving fire houses, public improvements [including wells, water storage facilities, distribution facilities, and similar public-infrastructure]. Schools, libraries, and similar institutions are generally associated with the Culture/Education theme although where those buildings served a dual role they may also be significant under government or community.

CULTURE

The theme of culture includes a wide variety of sub-themes including 19th and 20th century architecture. Based on the previously identified resources documented in Table 2.2. and 2.3., it is assumed that the majority of significant resources identified in any future survey in Talent will be single family residential structures of note for their architectural character under the broad cultural theme. Schools and other educational facilities, such as the Talent School/Community Center, religious buildings, such as the Old Baptist Church,

the Methodist Church and its parsonage, as well as structures associated with Fraternal Movements, such as Oddfellows Hall, all previously identified, may also fall under the cultural theme.

2.3. ARCHITECTURAL STYLES AND OCCURRENCE

Built resources may be broadly grouped into two major divisions: Residential and Commercial. While stylistic trends and architectural detailing of any given period may find expression in both housing and commercial construction, for the most part it is logical to treat these types separately and is according done so here. General stylistic groupings are based upon the *Oregon Architectural Style List*, as created by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office augmented by *Architecture Oregon Style*.⁴ Focused predominately on more urban styles, additional information considered more appropriate for the Talent context is based, in part, upon information found in *American Vernacular Design: 1870-1940*.⁵

2.3.1. COMMERCIAL AND PUBLIC STYLES

The historical record indicates that virtually no commercial activity of any type occurred in the study area prior to A.P. Talent's early 1880s general store. Virtually no information survives regarding the design of that building, or the ones that followed in the 1883 period coinciding with the arrival of the railroad through the area. Based on the general local pattern of development, as well as historical photograph, it is assumed that virtually all early commercial development was of wood construction, either plank or frame construction, and designed in simple, vernacular interpretations of the so-called "Falsefront" style.⁶ Typical styles for public buildings, including schools and churches, are also included under the Commercial heading.

⁴ See Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, *How to Prepare Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places: A Condensed Technical Guide for Oregon Property Owners*, (Salem: State Historic Preservation Office, 1992), Appendix IV, 79-81 and Rosalind Clark, *Architecture Oregon Style*, (Portland, Professional Book Center, Inc., 1983).

⁵ Gottfried and Jennings, *American Vernacular Design 1870:1940*, (Ames, Iowa, Iowa State University Press, 1988). See also Gottfried and Jennings, *American Vernacular Interior Architecture 1870-1940*, (New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1988).

⁶ See Photo 1.2, page 9 of this statement, for typical examples of the Falsefront style.

FALSEFRONT COMMERCIAL 1883-1911

A vernacular form, the Falsefront Commercial building is typically a one to two story high, wood-frame structure with a vertical orientation. The style is also known as “Western False Front” and is included under the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office heading of “Italianate.” Falsefront Commercial buildings often have recessed entry doors, with or without large, multi-paned, “storefront” windows. Typically designed with gable or shed volumes, the character defining facade extension hides the roof form from the street to create a rectangular “commercial block” appearance. Cornice details, including dentils, stepped or decorative pediments accent this feature. Siding is usually clapboard for frame construction although board and batten, particularly in plank construction, is also common.⁷

Falsefront commercial buildings did not create illusions that fooled the citizenry but provided symbolic evidence of the general civilizing process. The fronts were orderly, partly because their lot sizes were similar, and because the design relationships among the were proportional. The stores helped to create enclosure and gave the sense of a developing center, even if the development proved transitory. (Gottfreid and Jennings 1988:244)

An enduring form, the Falsefront Commercial style was utilized for Talent’s main retail and service core throughout the 19th century, ending with the rebuilding following the January 1911 fire that destroyed much of the downtown area. Surviving examples are likely throughout the core commercial areas of Talent Avenue and Wagner Road, as well as surviving buildings from the once-extant commercial area that lined the railroad tracks before the advent of the automobile as the primary transportation method.

RURAL GOTHIC 1880s-1900

Used almost exclusively to refer to simple, vernacular, interpretations of the formal gothic style for small community churches and schools, the Rural Gothic style refers to wood-frame public buildings with a dominant vertical feature that extends above the ridge, as in the steeple of a church or the bell tower of school building.

⁷ “Frame” construction is here used to denote either balloon or “western” framing where light vertical members [typically 2” x 4”] form the structural system of the building. “Plank” construction utilizes wide boards [typically 1” x 12”] set vertically to form the load bearing wall. “Plank” walls can be clad with horizontally siding, like frame buildings, or the structure can be left exposed, joints covered with battens. See Photo 2.1 for an example of this construction technique.

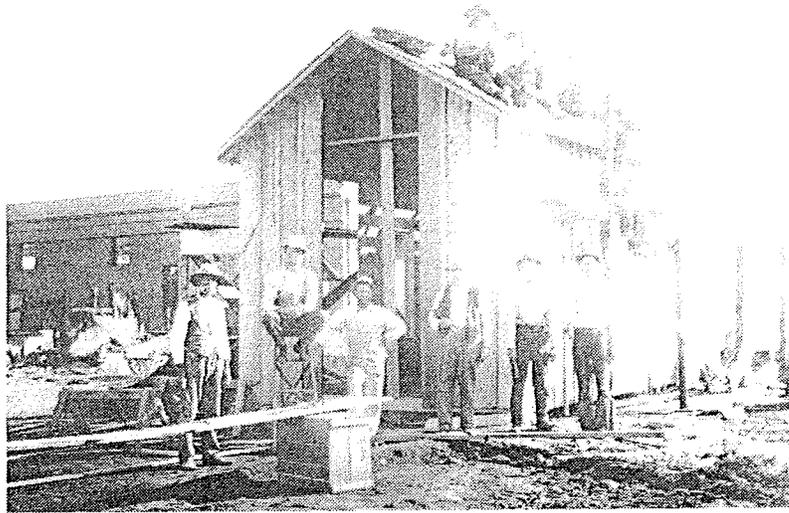


Photo 2.1 Plank Construction, Storage Building behind Wolters Store, c.1911-12 (City of Talent Collection)

Volumes are uniformly simple, generally with an open gable end as the primary facade. The vertical tower may either be engaged [rising from within the main roof line] or attached, creating a separate tower volume that breaks the rectangular footprint. On ecclesiastical buildings the pitch of the tower roof is generally very steep, over 12/12 while educational bell towers are more shallow. Siding is generally horizontal wood, broken by symmetrically placed openings such as high arched windows. Narrow vertical lancet or arched-top windows are typical in religious buildings of the style.

Historical accounts and previous surveys indicated that Rural Gothic public buildings will occur almost exclusively in the central commercial area of the original town plat.

CHICAGO SCHOOL COMMERCIAL 1911-1915

Also called “Brickfront,” the Chicago School commercial buildings were the logical extension of the earlier Falsefront style, sharing many of the same features in massing and design. Typically constructed as second phase development following the growth and solidification of the community, brick commercial buildings were seen as a sign of progress and permanence in a town. Oft-times built as a business prospered, many Chicago School buildings were rapidly constructed following the frequent fires that destroyed many early commercial

cores. Historic information indicates that the Wolters Store building, now demolished, was the first brick structure built in Talent, having been erected following the January 1911 fire that destroyed the earlier building on the site.

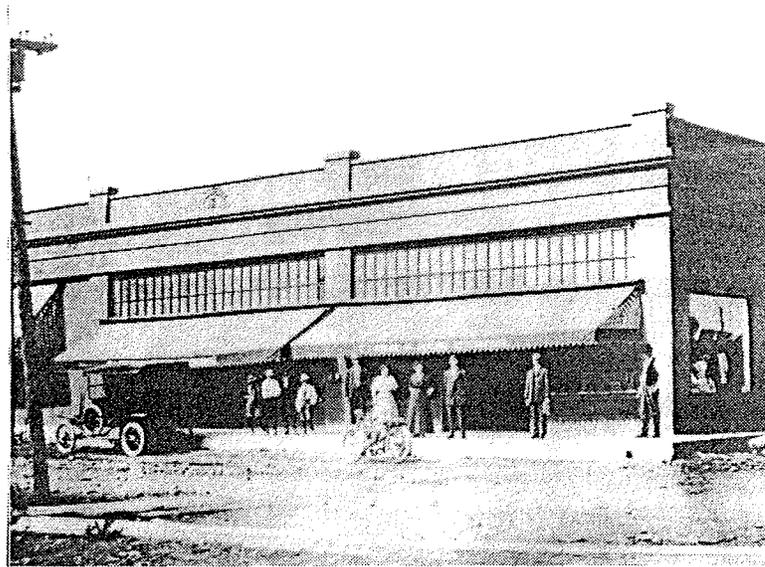


Photo 2.2 “Wolters Store” built 1911 (City of Talent Collection)

The “Chicago School” is typified by one or two story vertically-oriented buildings constructed of brick, concrete or stuccoed masonry. Facades, often containing three to five individual storefront entries, are divided by pilasters, recessed doorways, or other features into multiple “bays” or visual sections that continue to relate the narrow “slot” development of the underlying land division into lots. Like the Falsefront style, decorative cornice details, especially elaborate brick patterns, dentil bands, corbels and similar, are character-defining elements of the Chicago School style.

Stripped-down rural versions of the Chicago School typically replicate the massing and overall character of the brick examples but lack the characteristic detailing at the cornice level. Such examples are often found in concrete [both poured in place and block] as well as other masonry unit construction, notably hollow clay tile.⁸

⁸ Concrete block may be either of plain faced, as is common in modern construction, or of the wide variety of decorative block styles typical of pre-WWI concrete building. Hollow clay tile, a terra-cotta type material formed into interlocking pieces, often surfaced with stucco, was a hugely popular building technique in the northwest prior to WWII.

Examples of the style are expected to occur only along Talent Avenue or Wagner Road, in the core area of the town.

BUNGALOW COMMERCIAL 1910-1920

The popularity of the Bungalow for residential design found expression in public architecture, especially schools and churches, as well. Such buildings blend the traditional forms for these buildings with the design program associated with the Bungalow, Craftsman or Arts and Crafts style. Simple examples utilizing the typical front-facing, towered, volume described in Rural Gothic above, have the broad eaves and heavy bracketry or exposed rafter tails of the Bungalow style, mixed with multi-paned, rectangular windows that are generally wider than their Gothic predecessors. Covered front porches or projecting canopies, often with battered support pillars, and shingled gable ends are also common features. Siding is generally narrow horizontal wood, especially the so-called “double-drop” with two 3’ wide bands on each 6” wide board.⁹

More elaborate Bungalow Commercial buildings expand the simple rectangular volume to L-shaped floorplans, arrayed around a corner tower [as in the identified Methodist Church] or, the more symmetrical central tower plan, with flanking wings, as in the Talent School\Community Center.¹⁰

Examples of the Bungalow Commercial style are likely to occur both within the auto-based commercial core of Talent Avenue, Wagner Avenue and Main Street as well as in the earlier area surrounding the railroad depot and Talent Elementary School, west of the present core.

EARLY MODERN STYLES 1915-1940

Built during the exploration of new forms, the “Early Modern Styles” include Stripped Classical, Art Deco, Art Moderne, Modernistic, Adirondack, National Park and the so-called “Half-Modern” forms in the *Oregon Architectural Style List*. With the possible occurrence of Adirondack-inspired log construction [see Table 2, Early Motor Age, “Log House”] there is little expectation that any of these styles, occurring during a local period of declining population and deteriorating economy, were constructed in the Talent context.

⁹ Double-drop siding, fully 50% easier to install than earlier drop siding, is perhaps the best example of the Bungalow’s ability to exploit new technologies to achieve its “naturalistic” appearance.

¹⁰ Built in 1900 and temporally inconsistent with the period of Bungalow Commercial design, this building nevertheless exhibits much of the style’s characteristics.

EARLY MOTOR AGE STYLES 1915-1940

Although not formally included as stylistic category in the *Oregon Architectural Style List*, the recognizable styles associated with the early development of the automobile transportation system, and the ancillary uses that highway building generated, are considered a potentially significant trend by many recent sources.¹¹

Given the importance of auto transportation corridors in Talent's development history, early examples of cottage, period or bungalow-influenced interpretations for gas stations, motels, auto camps, and other features are considered likely within the study area. Typical features of the style are gable or clipped-gable roofs, generally shingle, with horizontal siding. Design schemes generally follow either a vernacular, simple bungalow, style [see below] or a more elaborate "period" style based on either European or early American models such as Colonial. While other, more exotic designs influenced by Egyptian, Spanish or programmatic models are possible, none is considered likely to have been built in Talent.

MODERN PERIOD 1935-PRESENT¹²

In general, "modern" commercial architecture, utilizing modern design idioms, materials, and massing is not considered within the scope of a historic context statement and is ignored during fieldwork for the survey of historic and cultural resources. However, where such structures exist in Talent, particularly those approaching 50 years of age or older and which are associated with the early Post-WWII boom period, it is useful to have a framework within which they can be understood.

Of the sub-categories presented in the *Oregon Architectural Style List*, the most applicable in Talent would be "highway commercial/strip development." Generally characterized by masonry volumes with simple, if any, decorative features, buildings in this style are expected to occur in along the post-1938 route of the Pacific Highway, the primary north-south corridor through Oregon from 1938 to 1963.

¹¹ See, for example, Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture*, (Boston: Little, Brown and CO., 1985) and Daniel Vieyra, *Fill 'er Up, An Architectural History of America's Gas Stations*. 1979

¹² These dates, like most of those here associated with broad stylistic categories, are based on the statewide system and should be used a guidelines only. In general, modern commercial architecture, based on literary evidence, appears to date from a later period, following WWII, in the specific Talent context.

UTILITARIAN STYLE [ALL PERIODS]

Much commercial building, particularly secondary storage facilities, manufacturing facilities, and similar structures are generally devoid of any stylistic attribute and are classified for comparative analysis as “Utilitarian.” Built during all periods, utilitarian buildings are simple, unadorned, functional structures with no pretense toward decoration. Typical exterior materials include various wood sidings [both vertical and horizontal] and, more recently, sheet materials. Metal cladding is used both for walls and roofs and masonry, usually unadorned concrete block or poured in place, are also typical of utilitarian buildings.

Commercial utilitarian buildings, especially those associated with early home-based occupations [either professional or service, such as turn-of-the-century blacksmith shops] may logically remain throughout the study area.¹³

2.3.2. 19TH CENTURY RESIDENTIAL STYLES

As discussed at length in the Historic Background [Section 1.3] little construction activity of any sort is known to have occurred in the study area prior to the late 1870s and early 1880s. The Talent town site, originally a portion of the Wagner Claim, appears to have remained vacant, or used a farm or ranch land, for virtually all of this period. As a result, although settlement activity and construction likely occurred surrounding the city [as discussed previously under the theme of “Settlement,” Section 1.5] no resources are considered to pre-date the late 1870s period.

As a small, essentially agrarian, community, Talent bypassed much of the typical construction pattern of surrounding southern Oregon towns. The community lacked the commercial and governmental focus of Jacksonville, the rapidly developed railroad economy of Ashland, and even the commercial and orchard development of Medford. Without that strong commercial or shipping focus and the accumulation of wealth such activity generated, little “high style” residential likely construction occurred in Talent in the 19th century. No evidence whatsoever indicates that of any structure falling within the styles generally groups under the collective sobriquet “Victorian” were ever built in the study area. With two notable exceptions, virtually all residential development known to have occurred within the 19th century period in Talent or vicinity is of the type classified

¹³ Various historic sources consulted in the preparation of this context indicate that small commercial ventures, such as produce stands, blacksmith shops, bicycle repair facilities, and similar businesses were often housed in small buildings accessory to a primary residence.

as “vernacular” by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office.¹⁴ Briefly, this office defines “vernacular” as follows:

Lacking stylistic character by which to categorize in any specific style mentioned [in the list of styles]. However, some buildings may show vaguely the influence of a particular style, but that influence is not strong enough to fit in the style list.¹⁵

In the past the term “vernacular” among architectural historians was considered to denote an inferior, or less significant, resource not meriting consideration. Recent scholarship has added new understanding to vernacular design on a variety of levels. The term was formerly limited to “Folk Housing” and studies of vernacular building types generally focused upon cultural influences, lifeways and social factors as they determined building design and construction.¹⁶ However, recent scholarship has expanded the term “vernacular” to include the housing constructed in response to, and to take advantage of, the increase in manufacturing and transportation that characterized the last quarter of the 19th century and continuing into the first decades of this century.

Whereas architectural values were once transmitted by word of mouth or by demonstration, in industrialized America they were transmitted through manufacturing—the changing of raw or finished materials into architectural products.(Gotffried & Jennings, 1988:VII)

The explosion of “vernacular” interpretations of dominant, recognizable, architectural styles, was greatly enhanced by increased availability of both planbooks of common styles and mass produced architectural details. Pre-built windows, including sash, crown moldings, and all hardware were readily available from Talent’s earliest development period. As one vernacular idiom was surpassed by the next, say 1/1 double windows giving way to the cottage window of the early 20th century, Talent’s builders would simply adapt earlier building forms to fit the newer fashion.¹⁷

¹⁴ The E.K. Anderson House, completed in 1889 was an elaborate Queen Anne style house and Welborn Beeson’s Octagon House, apparently built in the 1860s, are the sole deviations from the typical vernacular pattern to have been identified to date. Both located outside the city limits of Talent, the Anderson House burned in the 1950s and Beeson’s house was modified beyond recognition [and possible demolished] for the construction of the 1894 Foss-Beeson House, itself now listed in the State Inventory of Historic Places.

¹⁵ Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, *How to Prepare National Register Nominations*, 81.

¹⁶ See for example, the writings of Fred B. Kniffen, Dell Upton or Henry Glassie.

¹⁷ “Cottage Windows” refers to fixed, or movable single or double hung windows where the upper sash occupies 1/3 of the opening, and the bottom 2/3, as contrasted to the

Although formal survey work, as typically designed in Oregon, will most likely categorize most of Talent's 19th century and early 20th century residential architecture under the general category of "vernacular," the following attempts to provide some definition to the major sub-classification that are considered likely to occur within that broad term.¹⁸

I-HOUSE VARIANTS 1870-1900

Essentially defined by the floorplan of the primary volume, the typical I-House is a side-facing gable, with ridge parallel to the street, one room deep and one to two stories high. Siding is almost universally horizontal wood, most commonly weatherboard. The central entry door may be located under a small canopy or a front porch, often hipped, may extend the length of the facade. Window arrangement is symmetrical, usually narrow 1/1 double hung sash. A gable or partial hipped rear wing, generally the kitchen area, often extends the structure to the rear. Chimneys are generally interior and most early examples have a corbelled cap. Cornerboards and window trim is generally simple although may be modified to reflect the individual design program within the following sub-groups of the basic I-House form. Historic photographs indicate I-Houses to have been the dominant residential type in Talent as late as 1910. In Photo 2.3, below, the central residence, facing the camera, as well as most of the buildings visible to the right of the photo all exhibit the basic I-House plan. [See also Photo 1.6 for additional early I-House examples]

Over the span of Talent's historical development, the basic I-House floorplan was cloaked in exterior design schemes that reveal an influence from more elaborate architectural styles. Some of the major of these "variants" are;

Gothic Revival

The basic I-house volume is accented by a central wall dormer, creating a "peak" over the primary entry and adding to the "vertical" character of the structure, typical of the Gothic Revival style. Window surrounds may have more elaborate "hoods" or other detailing around an otherwise rectilinear frame.

Classic Revival

The I-House in its most unadorned format, Classical Revival [or Classical Survivals for earlier versions] is defined by horizontal siding with corner boards and plain cornice friezes. Many earlier examples are smaller in scale, limited to a single story and, in place of the gable rear wing, have a shed extension creating a

typically equal sized sashes of earlier construction. Often the upper 1/3 sash would be further divided into multiple smaller panes, or lights.

¹⁸ Oregon is one of the few states to have fully computerized its State Inventory of Historic Places, a valuable research tool that unfortunately, and necessarily, often limits categorization to accepted standardized terms.

“saltbox” elevation. See, for example, the historic example shown in Photo 1.6, the second structure from the left, facing Main Street.

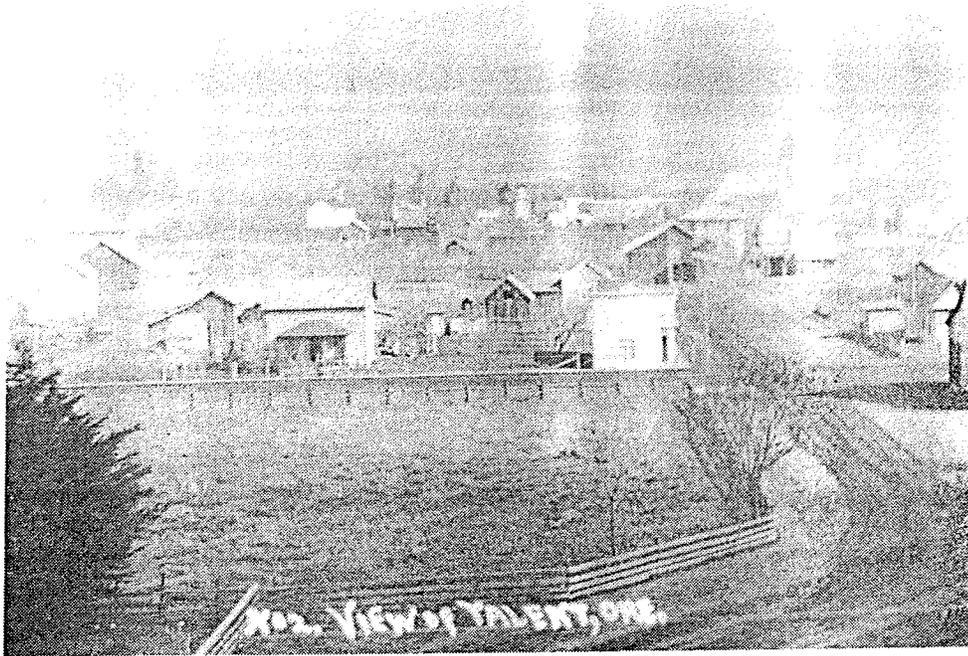


Photo 2.3 Birdseye View, from Talent Elementary, c. 1911-12
(from Richard Lohr Collection.)

L-Farmhouse [Vernacular EII]

A larger and more elaborate form, the L-Farmhouse is an outgrowth of the basic I-House volume in which an attached wing, also a single-room in depth, expands the floorplan at right angles, created a “L.” This wing could be the same height as the front facing gable but was often subservient to it. Applied detailing could employ elements of the Gothic, Classical or some mixture of these and other styles. One of the best known examples to have been built in Talent, the William H. Breese House, is shown in Photo 2.4.¹⁹

Almost exclusively two-stories in height, the L-Farmhouse was common in rural situations, hence the name. It also proved popular in town settings for individuals with larger families, more economic ability, or both. Historic photos indicated this form to be present in Talent early on, most notably shown in the structure in the immediate foreground of Photo 1.6.

¹⁹ The Breese House, built c.1888 on what is now Talent Avenue, near the Wagner Creek crossing, was razed in the 1950s.

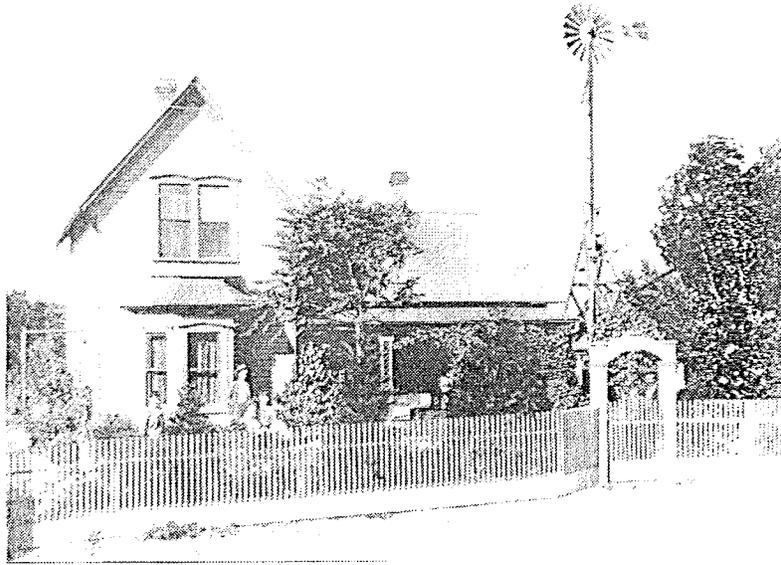


Photo 2.4 W.H. Breese House, South Talent Avenue, c.1895.
(Breese Family Collection)

HIPPED ROOF COTTAGES 1895-1905

Primarily constructed in the ten year period centered on the turn-of-century, the character defining feature of this style is, obviously, its hipped or pyramidal roof form. Always one-story in height, hipped roof cottages vary from the earlier I-House in stacking rooms, two or more, in depth. Often this followed the development of interior plumbing and the placement of a bathroom in the center of two chambers, or bedrooms.

Stylistically, the basic hipped-roof form could again be cloaked in exterior detailing associated with Gothic or Classical styles. Window orientation, however, usually has a more horizontal aspect, often with larger fixed panes flanked by operable narrow sashes or groups of double-hung windows, all of which provide increased daylight to the interior.

ITALIANATE AND FOURSQUARE 1880-1915

An outgrowth of the earlier Italianate, as well as the hipped-roof cottage, above, and the Craftsman, below, the Foursquare, sometimes called the "American Foursquare" shares most stylistic characteristics of the hipped roof cottage, done up in a two story or large format. Versions with vestigial Italianate features,

particularly heavy detailing at the soffit, are generally classified under that term. Roof pitch is generally shallower for “Italianate” forms and often includes a “widow’s walk” when the hip is truncated.²⁰

2.3.3. 20TH CENTURY RESIDENTIAL STYLES

With the advent of the 20th century, new architectural forms rose to prominence although earlier examples, particularly the I-House variants, likely continued to be constructed throughout the pre-WWI period. This was especially true in more rural areas such as Talent than in the larger cities of the Rouge River Valley.

Partially in response to the perceived ills and excesses of the Victorian style, and the growing acceptance of the functional “Foursquare” and other “vernacular” forms, two new styles emerged in the first decade of the 20th century: the “Bungalow” and the “Craftsman.” Popular during the economic boom surrounding the growth of the orchard industry, a period which saw both Talent’s incorporation and expansion, each of these architectural forms is considered likely to be well represented in the study area.²¹

BUNGALOW 1905-1930²²

An unfortunately over-worked and mis-used term, the “Bungalow” style is appropriately applied to houses exhibiting a clearly defined program of architectural characteristics. These include a maximum of one and one-half story, generally limited to small attic spaces augmented by dormer extensions, a wide, broadly overhanging roof that emphasizes the general horizontal character of the design, a large front porch, often wrapping around a corner to create a verandah, and a conscious interplay between interior and exterior spaces thorough the presence of pergolas [covered or lattice-work extensions, frequently used to support trailing vegetation] and large, over-sized windows, doors, or screened in

²⁰ In the past simple versions of the “Foursquare” have been dubbed the “Transitional Box” style, indicated the transition from the elaborate detail and vertical massing of the Victorian styles to the simpler and horizontal forms of the Bungalow. This term in not considered appropriate or accurate.

²¹ Much of the information for this section is based upon research undertaken for *Bungalow and Craftsman Architecture; 1900-1940*, a style-specific Historic Context Statement prepared by the author for the City of Albany, Oregon in August 1992.

²² Some architectural histories distinguish the Bungalow style from the generic term “bungalow” denoting any small house of the period. Despite the historic accuracy of such usage (the term bungalow *was* applied to a wide variety of styles) such usage only continues to add to the confusion surrounding the style and should be avoided.

porches.²³ All these features should be present for a building to be considered a “Bungalow” as opposed to a vernacular interpretation of the basic style.

Typical features of the Bungalow style include battered porch pillars [columns tapered toward the top with wide, often over-sized bases] made of either wood, brick or cobblestone, exaggerated roof brackets made of 4x4 or larger lumber, sweeping roof eaves, and exposed rafter tails, often scroll cut to provide visual interest to the roof line. Frequently the style employs a mixture of materials in the same design: i.e. a masonry porch, horizontal wood siding and wood shingled gable ends. In keeping with the joining of interior and exterior spaces, windows in Bungalow dwellings are often over-sized, set in banks with large fixed central panes flanked by casement or double hung windows. Leaded and stained glass, particularly diamond-pattern lights used as the upper sash of “cottage” type windows, are also typical.

Given the dominance of the Bungalow style, which remained a popular housing type until WWII, examples will likely occur throughout town both as original construction as well as replacement dwellings constructed after fires or demolition. Additions that were added to the city limits in the area immediately subsequent to incorporation, such as the Gibson Tract [added 1910], the Shindler Addition [1910], the Wagner Butte Addition [1911] and the McCloud Addition [1911] are considered prime locations for both Bungalow and Craftsman style construction.

CRAFTSMAN 1905-1920

Philosophically related to the Bungalow, the “Craftsman” style is in effect a marriage of the stylistic and exterior design elements of the Bungalow idiom with the floorplan perfected in the Foursquare and vernacular Italianate. The impetus for this variation was predominately economic: many narrow building lots could not effectively provide the required space in the horizontal Bungalow footprint to make a home of sufficient size to be salable. The Craftsman, therefore, is typically a two- to two and one-half story structure, often with shallow hipped roof highlighted by the bungalows broad overhanging eaves. Hipped or gable dormers often are found on one or more elevations. Large front porches, as well as the specific stylistic details mentioned in connection with the Bungalow, are also common features.

Again like the Bungalow, the Craftsman was chiefly popular during a time of population and economic growth in Talent. It is considered a likely resource type

²³ The underlying philosophy of the original Bungalow style was one that appreciated and celebrated the natural world as a cleansing and purifying force. This contrasted strongly with the Victorian period’s fears of “vapors” and other perceived noxious aspects of the natural world, a world the formal architecture of the period attempted to keep at bay.

throughout the town, with particular emphasis on the additions that were platted coincident with incorporation.

HISTORIC PERIOD REVIVALS 1920-1935

Following World War I, much of America's residential architecture looked toward European or historic models for inspiration. Quaint-appearing "cottages" often with clad with structurally irrelevant trim and detail, attempting to recapture or recreate various earlier architectural styles. Many, such as Moorish, Jacobethan, Pueblo and Egyptian were geographically dependent or simply too exotic for widespread use. Only three of the major Historic Period Revival styles are considered likely to occur, and then only rarely if at all, anywhere within the study area:

Colonial Revival

Harkening back to the architecture associated with the founding the nation, Colonial Revival architecture is characterized by low-pitched gable or gambrel roofs, bilateral symmetry, classical-inspired Doric or Ionic columns, eave returns and Palladian-type windows with arched top paned above multi-light double-hung or fixed sash. Narrow horizontal wood siding, sidelights at the entry are also typical.

Spanish Colonial

Universally of masonry or stucco-finished wood frame construction, character defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style included low pitched gable roofs, often with red clay tile, round arch-top window and door openings, massive chimneys and multi-paned windows. Window and door openings are often unframed, detailed in manner to imply massive wall thickness as if of adobe or similar construction.

Norman Farmhouse

Structures in the Norman Farmhouse style often employ multiple materials, mixing horizontal wood, shingle, stucco and brick in varied bands. Character-defining features included a highly pitched gable ends, often with a "swoop" or bell-cast type curve. Entryways are often recessed, with arched openings and matched arch top doors and windows. Large chimneys, usually brick, are often topped with projecting flue liners of terra cotta.

OTHER 20TH CENTURY STYLES:

Andirondack Rustic 1920s-1930s

Not considered to be prevalent in the study area, this style would logically apply to the "log house" inventoried by Doerter in 1979-1980. A limited number of additional examples may also be present within the Talent context. Character defining features of the Rustic style are the log-construction walls, often with

exposed end detailing and the use of smaller stick\log features as knee-braces, gable ornament and other features. Masonry chimneys and other feature often are of large cobblestone or random laid ashlar.

Minimal Eave Tract 1930s-1940s

The Minimal Eave style includes both pre-WWII “builder” housing, usually one to one and one half story gable roof volumes that were built from stock plans by local contractors, and, in the Rogue Valley, relocated military buildings originally used at Camp White, a military base located east of Medford. Character defining features are the absence of overhang, or eaves, that give the style its name. Siding is usually horizontal wood, often 6” shiplap. Exterior detailing is usually symmetrical, often modestly Colonial in appearance. Camp White buildings are further characterized by the extremely shallow roof pitch [typically 6/12] and the use of multi-paned wood sash windows. In southern Oregon the popular period of Minimal Eave tract did not generally coincide with large scale building activity. As a result this style is expected to occur singly throughout Talent, used a in-fill or replacement housing prior to the war and, as relocated buildings, in a similar fashion afterward.

Ranch House 1940-

Rising to popularity in the boom period following WWII, the “Ranch” House is considered likely to prove the dominant architectural style throughout much of the study area. Characterized by a single-story plan and horizontal character, the Ranch House, like the I-House of the previous century, is predominately a style determined by floorplan. As such, exterior design schemes of Colonial, Spanish, Mediterranean and mixed influences may all be found within the basic “Ranch” category. While potentially present throughout the study area as infill or replacement housing, the postwar subdivisions of LaPree, Meadowslope, and Christian Acres Unit 1 and Unit 2 are considered likely areas for concentrations of the style.

2.4. “NON-BUILT” RESOURCES

Generally, historic and cultural resource surveys concentrate on what are termed “built” resources such as houses, stores, barns, warehouses and other buildings designed for human occupation or use. However, other resource types are also of potential significance and require study. Previous surveys of Talent, as well as the designated resources included in Article 13 (7) of the city’s land development ordinance have already identified two “non-built” resources. These are the Fort Wagner site and the Oregon Irrigation landmark. Other non-built resources are likely present within the study area. Some types considered potentially significant within the Talent context are as follows.

2.4.1. SITES

Potentially significant sites include both the location of a previously extant structure [such as Fort Wagner], or the land associated with a historically significant activity, or traditional use. Resource types included under sites, broadly, may include parks, cemeteries, archaeological areas, and other man-made landscapes.²⁴

2.4.2. NATURAL FEATURES

Natural features, as opposed to sites, are naturally occurring landscapes that play an important role in the development of the context. Potentially significant natural features within Talent may include creeks, swales, rock out-croppings, hills, mountains or historically noteworthy trees.

2.4.3. MONUMENTS AND MARKERS

Monuments, markers, and plaques that commemorate or identify historically significant activity or locations are all potentially important within the context. Statues, drinking fountains, benches and similar resources installed and marked as commemorative are also to be considered. The previously designated Oregon Irrigation Landmark would fall under this resource type.

2.4.4. OBJECTS AND STRUCTURES

In general, objects and structures may range from large, movable resources of such as locomotives and manufacturing equipment, to infrastructure systems [such a water storage facilities] or canals. Early street signs, street lighting, advertising features, and other miscellaneous resource types that may be significant within the context are also included under this category.

Perhaps the most likely resource type to be considered under Objects and Structures are transportation-related features, particularly bridges, sidewalks, and similar improvements. “Structures” is also applicable for non-inhabitable built resources such as water towers, well houses, out-houses and the like when *not associated* with any surviving primary dwelling.

²⁴ The term “man-made” is here used to denote any human activity, without regard to gender, that has altered or effected the character of the natural environment.

PART III EVALUATION

Based upon the themes and resource types presented in Parts I and II of this Historic Context statement, a comprehensive survey involving both archival and fieldwork should be undertaken to identify the specific extant historic and cultural resources that relate the historic development of the City of Talent. Following that data collection process, identified resources require “evaluation” to determine their relative capacity to successfully relate significant historic association. In the *Handbook to Preservation Planning in Oregon*, the State Historic Preservation Office defines evaluation as follows:

Evaluation is the process by which identified property types are compared to their character defining components and ranked according to integrity and condition criteria. Evaluation criteria is derived from National Register standards, the ‘best to minimum’ example model, and associative cultural value. The evaluation process is extremely important to the development of treatment strategies. (Hamrick & Spedula, 1989:18)

Generally, any future survey should identify and evaluate all 50-year old or older resources within the given geographical framework. There are exceptions to this rule, however, for properties that have gained significance only within the past 50 years.

As a general rule, properties eligible for inclusion in the Statewide Inventory of Historic Properties area at least fifty years old. Properties less than fifty years old may be included if they are exceptionally noteworthy and meet one or more of the criteria under each of the essential headings; Integrity, Distinction, and Educative\Associative Value.¹

The evaluation criteria presented in this section, therefore, are intended to guide the process of evaluating resources identified following the comprehensive survey of the City of Talent. Standardized definitions of “integrity” and “condition” along with basic levels of significance within the identified historic themes should all be factored into the ranking process.

¹ Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, *Historic Preservation and the Oregon Land Use Planning Program*, (Salem, 1990), 16.

3.I. EVALUATION CRITERIA

3.I.I. INTEGRITY

Integrity refers to the ability of an identified resource to successfully relate either its original design or some later period of significance as a consequence of the intactness of historic form, original or historic use of materials, setting, and site. It is important to note that change and modification are often an inherent part of development and that when those changes accurately reflect the evolution of a resource over time, they do not necessarily diminish any ability to successfully relate significance. The standardized process recognizes three levels of integrity for the evaluation of historic and cultural resources.

Intact/Virtually Intact

The resource retains its original or historically significant appearance and fabric, including massing, architectural detail, surface treatment, windows, and doors, and essentially remains in its original or historically significant setting with little or no visible modifications that overtly diminish ability to relate historical association.

Minor Modification

Minor alterations have occurred over time that are reversible, or that are in keeping with the construction technique and the stylistic character of the building's period or periods of significance.

Major Modification

A high percentage of the original or historically significant form and materials have been substantially altered, removed, or *irreversibly* obscured by modern details or materials so that the building no longer successfully relates its significant associations and detracts from the continuity of the streetscape.

Assessment of integrity, by definition, must allow for the innate character of any particular resource type. Where change and alteration is intrinsic to the resource, as in a natural feature or an agricultural facility, such must be factored into the evaluation process.

3.1.2. SIGNIFICANCE

The base evaluation model for historic and cultural resources employs the standards of significant set forth by the National Park Service and detailed in *Historic Preservation and the Oregon Land Use Planning Program*. Resources are individually assessed for comparative significance to the context within the following broad categories:

EDUCATIVE OR ASSOCIATIVE VALUE;

Historical Association

Significance through association with a *person, group, organization or event* that has made a significant contribution, or is illustrative of the broad *pattern* of cultural, social, political, economic, or industrial history, of the community, region, state or nation.

Architectural Distinction

Significance as an exemplar of a particular architectural *style or building type*, as having *design or artistic quality*, utilizing a *particular material or construction*

Rarity

Significance as a *rare or unique surviving example* of a type or association within the context

Environmental

Significance as a *visual landmark*, in setting or as an element in *continuity or character* of the street, neighborhood or community.

3.1.3. CONDITION

The evaluation of “condition” considers the present physical state of any given resource in terms of readiness and adequacy for use. The standardized evaluation system utilizes a four level ranking terminology of “Poor, Fair, Good and Excellent.”

It must be stressed that “condition” simply relates the *present* physical character of any given resource and that poor condition, on its own, in no way detracts from a potentially high level of significance or integrity in the evaluation of historic or cultural resources.

3.2. RANKING

Following both the fieldwork and identification of potentially significant historic resources, and the evaluation of those resources against the basic criteria and specific thematic framework of this context statement, the evaluation processes continues to the ranking phase. “Ranking” compares the combined integrity and significance of evaluated resources within the context and stratifies them into qualitative categories to aid in the planning process. The standardized five-tiered system should be used.

Primary

Historic or cultural resources of high associative or architectural significance and integrity that play a substantial individual role in the historic landscape of the study area. Resources designated as “primary” should be those that significantly contribute to the understanding of the broad patterns of the historical development of the area, are excellent examples of a specific period or type of architecture or building, or are strongly associated with notable figures or groups that played an instrumental role in the development of the area.

Secondary

Historic or cultural resources of some associative or architectural significance that play a lesser but still important role in the historic landscape of the study area. These properties are often virtually intact architecturally or display minor modifications but represent less important aspects of, or are lesser examples of particular broad patterns in, the development of the area. Resources that have not yet attained sufficient antiquity, but are exemplary of an uncommon architectural style may also be included in this category.

Contributing

Historic resources that have little associative value or architectural significance yet provide a valuable contextual element within the historic landscape of the study area. Buildings considered as “contributing” are generally those that have been modified from their appearance during the period of significance yet do not diminish from the historic continuity of the study area.

Non-Contributing [Historic]

Resources that are older than 50 years of age but that have been severely modified to a state that no longer conveys their original or historically significant exterior appearance, construction, setting, form, or use of materials. Such resources no longer contribute visually to the historic continuity of the study area.

Non-Contributing

Resources less than 50 years of age which though scale, massing, design, use of materials or other features do not contribute visually to the historic continuing of the study area.

3.3. SAMPLE EVALUATION FORM

The sample evaluation form, following on pages 70 and 71, is recommended by the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, for the evaluation process. It provides an excellent model for any future evaluation of historic and cultural resources in Talent according to the above guidelines.



Photo 3.1 Talent Avenue, looking North, c. 1912-1913
(From the Richard Lohr Collection)

SAMPLE RESOURCE EVALUATION FORM

[AFTER SHPO]

Historical Association

1. PERSON/GROUP/ORGANIZATION: Associated with the life or activities of a person, group, organization, or institution that has made a significant contribution to the community, state, or nation.
 - a) particularly strong
 - b) strong
 - c) some
 - d) none

2. EVENT: Associated with an event that has made a significant contribution to the community, state, or nation.
 - a) particularly strong
 - b) strong
 - c) some
 - d) none

3. PATTERN: Associated with, an illustrative of, broad patterns of cultural, social, political, economic, or industrial history in the community, state, or nation.
 - a) particularly strong
 - b) strong
 - c) some
 - d) none

Architecture

1. STYLE/BUILDING/TYPE/CONVENTION: Significance as an example of a particular architectural style, building, type, or convention.
 - a) excellent
 - b) very good
 - c) good
 - d) of little interest

2. DESIGN/ARTISTIC QUALITY: Significance due to quality of composition, detailing, and craftsmanship.
 - a) excellent
 - b) very good
 - c) good
 - d) of little interest

3. MATERIALS/CONSTRUCTION: Significance as an example of a particular material or method of construction.
 - a) excellent
 - b) very good
 - c) good
 - d) of little interest

4. INTEGRITY: Significance because it retains its original design features, materials and character
 - a) no apparent alterations
 - b) minor alterations
 - c) major alteration but overall character preserved
 - d) severely altered; little character preserved

5. RARITY: Significance as the only remaining, or one of the few remaining, properties of a particular style, building type, design, material, or method of construction
 - a) one of a kind
 - b) one of a few
 - c) one of several
 - d) one of many

Environment

1. LANDMARK: Significance as a visual landmark.
 - a) symbol for the city
 - b) conspicuous, well-known in the community
 - c) conspicuous, well-known in the neighborhood
 - d) non conspicuous or well-known

2. SETTING: Significance because current land-use surrounding the property contributed to the integrity of the pertinent historic period.
 - a) excellent
 - b) very good
 - c) good
 - d) fair/poor

3. CONTINUITY: Significance because the property contributes to the continuity or character of the street, neighborhood, or community.
 - a) establishes character
 - b) important in maintaining character
 - c) compatible
 - d) incompatible

PART IV TREATMENT

4.I. FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDS

The primary purpose behind the research and preparation of this historic context statement is to guide the documentation and analysis of historic and cultural resources within the context defined in Section 1.1. The study area is the City of Talent, Oregon and its urban growth boundary. The completion of the context statement also identifies additional research needs that may the documentation of Talent's development and assist in the city's historic resource management program. Primary research needs are as follows:

4.I.I. SURVEY AND INVENTORY

The present limited survey of historic and cultural resources is both outdated and inadequate. No comprehensive field review of extant resources, nor any comparative analysis or evaluations of significance has been prepared for the limited number of designated resources listed in Article 13, Section 7 of the city's land development code. Present information, consisting only of site name and address, is not of sufficient depth to provide guidance to planning staff or appointed commissions required to review actions concerning these resources. Additionally, some errors of fact in location are present, indicating the need, *at minimum*, to formally and accurately survey the surviving fourteen designated sites in that section to current standards for inclusion in the Statewide Inventory of Historic Places [SIHP].

A more comprehensive approach, however, is recommended as it is apparent from this study that additional resources certainly exist within the Talent area that will prove to be of the quality and type to merit consideration for inclusion in the city's designated resource list. Therefore, the first priority following approval of this context should be the preparation of an *intensive-level survey* of the presumed concentration of historic resources in the area of the original town plat.¹ Additional areas, particularly the early Gibson Tract, Shidler, and other additions may also be included in this initial survey, funding and timing permitting. Matching funds for survey work of this type are available

¹ The original plat of Talent, as filed in 1889, is recorded in Jackson County Deed Records, Volume 19:230-33 and 19:312

through the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office and it is understood that the city has applied for such a grant. Should that grant be not be funded, the minimum documentation suggested above is highly recommended.

Other portions of the City of Talent, predominately those additions the city filed in the post-historic period, may also hold selected earlier resources of potential significance. A reconnaissance level survey that identifies resources of that type, may be accomplished in addition to the above recommended intensive survey. Selected resources in these other portions of the city that merit individual study may also be intensively researched for local or SIHP designation as appropriate.

4.1.2. FURTHER STUDY

The present context study was limited temporally to the period following initial Euro-American settlement of the Talent region. Additional research into the activities of native peoples in the region, along with any archaeological resources that may survive relating those activities, would be the logical focus of an additional study project.

Little information regarding the character or activity of the Talent area prior to the arrival of the railroad and the platting of the town in the early 1880s was located. While the assumption that little building activity, commerce, or other patterns of note occurred in the study area, more information would clarify the history of Talent's pre-settlement era. The best identified resource that could assist in that task are the Welborn Beeson Diaries, consisting of daily entries from 1853 to 1893, held by the Special Collections Department of the University of Oregon's Knight Library. With the exception of portions of the first years, relative to Beeson's experience on the Oregon Trail, little of this valuable source has been transcribed or indexed. Beeson, a perceptive and wide-ranging commentator on local events, should provide substantial information on the 1860s-1870s period of the Talent area. An indexed transcript of the Beeson Diaries would not only be useful to our understanding of Talent but should prove valuable for the entire Southern Oregon region and beyond. Funding for such a project might be available from a wide range of sources outside the normal preservation scope, including local and state historic agencies, private foundations, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

4.2 PRESENT REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

As stated elsewhere in this document, historic and cultural resources in the City of Talent are presently regulated under Article 13 of the City's land development, or zoning, ordinance. This Article, titled "Historic Sites, Buildings and District Overlay Zone, was adopted in November 1980. The ordinance contains standard purpose and definition sections for the newly created HD overlay zone, the designation of sixteen resources as historic and provides guidelines for both additional designation as well as exterior

remodeling, demolition, and other typical preservation ordinance concerns. Section 1, “Title, Description and Purpose,” states:

The older part of Talent, lands within the historic overlay district, and other specific sites, contain the City’s historic fabric and are characteristic of small, rural towns of the early to mid-1900s. Such towns are few in number, particularly when located in the midst of a growing metropolitan area. The City also has some remnants of its beginnings and the railroad era of the late 1800s. *It is the intent of the City to preserve the rural, small town, identity of Talent and sites important to its heritage for the education, enjoyment and pride of its citizens and visitors.* The purpose of this article is to establish the standards, requirements, and uses in the HD zone and in regard to the designated historic sites important to Talent’s identity. [emphasis added]

Written in 1979, Article 13 is typical of preservation ordinances of that period and, to a point, has served the city well since passage. Two of the initial sixteen designated properties have since been demolished, one of which, the Knighten House, was lost only after a bitter public debate on the proposal. A presumably “contributing” feature of another listed resource, a watertower associated with the so-called “Logan House” on Wagner, has also been razed. No additional properties have been designated as historic resources since adoption nor does the impact of the HD overlay appear to be clearly understood by the community.²

Specific recommendations, referenced to existing individual sections, for updating or modification of Article 13 or its successor are;³

Section 2: General

- a. A “definitions” section should be developed and inserted to clarify the terms and conventions used in the ordinance
- b. The HD zone, documented only in map format, appears to be limited to a portion of town west of the Railroad track, along with a non-contiguous segment lining Gibson Street. Specific other structures along Talent and Main, in the commercial core east of the rails, are also individually designated. A more appropriate zone, perhaps following determinations of concentration by the

² The present survey lacks both evaluation and sufficient commentary to determine the status of secondary structures such as the watertower. It is assumed had such been done the tower would have proved a significant element of the Logan property.

³ These recommendations are intended as a general commentary only and should not be viewed in any fashion as a comprehensive review of Article 13 or its potential revision.

recommended survey and inventory process, would likely extend east of the railroad to include the traditional governmental and commercial core of the community along the Pacific Highway [Talent Avenue]. At minimum, the exact boundaries of the HD zone, in both text and map format, should be included in Article 13, if only by reference.

Section 4: General Standards of the HD Zone

- a. This section provides that all development plans within the HD zone, “. . .with the exception of a conventional or single family dwelling must be submitted to the planning commission [to] show the architectural style of the proposed building *which must conform* to the following general standards. . .”[emphasis added]

The two standards, both of which require development to “. . .be designed in a manner that meets the description and purpose set forth in Section 1. . .” are overly vague and lack specific criteria for evaluation of any potential proposal. For example, no discussion by inclusion or reference as to acceptable materials, building types, styles, setback, volume, construction, or any other factors, is present to define what is meant by “conformance” with the general intent of Section 1. As a result, Section 4, as written, is presumed to be unenforceable.

As a result, the single most pressing need in the revision of Talent’s current regulatory framework for historic and cultural resources is the development of design standards. *Clear and objective* standards governing restoration, renovation, and new construction within the HD Overlay that are consistent with the overall goal of Article 13 should therefore be developed as soon as is possible. Such standards should be prepared in a graphic format that can be reproduced for distribution to potential developers and property owners, clarifying the regulatory framework under which projects are to be reviewed. Upon adoption, design standards should be incorporated into Section 4 by reference.

Section 5 Amending Historic Districts

Section 7 Historic Buildings and Sites Designated

Section 8 Designation of New Historic Buildings and Sites

- a. All essentially related to the designation of properties falling within the purview of Article 13, Sections 5 and 8, concern the amending of the city’s inventory of historic resources. They should be combined for clarity and brevity.

- b. Section 7, the present inventory, should be amended to remove listing of locally designated historic and cultural resources from the body of the ordinance and include the creation a separate “landmark” list incorporated by title.
- c. The entire designation process, both for existing resources listed under Section 7, as well as potential additions under Sections 5 and 8, is lacking in objective criteria for inclusion. Presently Article 13 delineates the process by which properties may be designated but provides no guidance as to the basis for doing so, or the basis by which those currently designated were evaluated and determined significant. The development and inclusion of the criteria, typically patterned after the four criterion for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places, is recommended as a part of any revision to Article 13.

Section 9 Exterior Remodeling

- a. This section defines the process and documentation requirements for applications concerning *designated* historic resources, in addition to the requirements of Section 4 that covers the HD Overlay zone itself. Section 9(b), titled “Standards” reads;

All enlargements or exterior alterations, or remodeling, of buildings or structures designated in Section 7 shall have building design, and finishes *of a type that will promote and preserve the historical and/or architectural integrity of the building or structure.* [emphasis added]

As noted above, in comments on Section 4, vague and non-specific standards regarding permitted approaches to exterior alteration and remodeling are not consistent with the clear and objective standards requirements of current Oregon law. As a result, this section, as currently written, is also considered to be essentially unenforceable. As suggested above, standards with examples of acceptable and non-acceptable practice should also be developed for designated resources that are consistent with the general intent of Article 13. Specific ranges of materials, construction techniques, glazing, orientation, massing and other character defining features should be determined for restoration and rehabilitation and included by reference into the revised code language.

It is considered likely that similar standards may be developed for both the HD Overlay as a whole and the specific designated resources.

Section 15: Coordination of New Development

- a. Governing what is generally known as “in-fill” development, meaning new construction located within historically sensitively areas or districts, this section sets a standard of review for all projects within 150’ of any designated resource. Paragraph (a) stipulates that such new development will;

preserve and not adversely affect the character an integrity of the historical building or site. . .

As in Sections 4 and 9, above, such a standard, lacking in clear and objective criteria, is inconsistent with Oregon planning law and likely not enforceable. Detailed standards for new construction within historic areas should be adopted and incorporated by reference into this section of Article 13.

The 150’ scope may be sufficient to adequately protect the overall character of the HD Zone. A more likely and more practical standard would expand review of new construction through the HD zone area.

Prioritized Recommendations:

1. At *minimum*, clear and objective standards regarding the design and materials permitted for renovation, remodeling, and new construction within the HD Overlay, and for the remaining designated resources included in Section 7, should be developed and implemented as soon as possible. Without clear and objective standards, the city lacks sufficient review over these resources and areas of the community to effectively direct future development.
2. Remaining suggestions for the revision of Article 13, including the development of definitions, eligibility criteria and other sections mentioned above should be included in a thorough review and re-evaluation of Article 13 that brings it into compliance with both current planning standard and Oregon law.

Conclusions: Present Regulatory Environment

Article 13, as written, had the laudable goal of establishing a framework for the review, protection, and ultimately, retention of the “rural, small town, character,” of the City of Talent in the late 1970s. As such, it was a significant and meaningful step of which Talent should be proud. In the

past fifteen years, however, land use planning in Oregon has grown in complexity and the legal environment surrounding contested decisions has drastically altered the requirements on local development code. As currently written, Article 13 fails to adequately protect historic and cultural resources within the city and therefore fails to accomplish its stated purpose. Recent years have shown that Talent's historic resources will continue to face mounting pressure both for demolition, remodelings, and well-intentioned restoration. It is imperative that the City's ordinal framework be in place and successfully guiding development if Talent is to retain a meaningful connection to its historic small town character. The present ordinance, in effect, offers little or no ability to regulate development within the HD zone.

4.3. EDUCATION

4.3.1. CITY SPONSORED

The City of Talent, through its Planning and Urban Renewal efforts, has many opportunities to turn required planning activities as proposed under Sections 4.1 and 4.2 into educational opportunities that will 1) involve the public at large in the process surrounding the identification of historic and cultural resources and 2) educate both the public and the local builder and development community as to appropriate or preferred building and design within the HD overlay zone. Such activity will not only heighten the success of Talent's preservation efforts in terms of creating a generally supportive partnership but will also create broader understanding of the importance of preservation and compatible in-fill design as an element of maintaining Talent's rural, small town, character. Specific city sponsored opportunities include;

Survey Phase

The process of historic survey and inventory provides a logical opportunity for the dissemination of the history of the built environment in Talent via events and publications. Press releases and public presentations at the beginning of the process not only alleviate concerns about the potential impacts of the survey, but also provide a valuable mechanism for the collection of owner-information that materially add to the quality of the study. In addition to basic informational flyers, sent to all property owners in the surveyed area, a questionnaire or other opportunity for owners to provide information is an easy and inexpensive way of bringing owners into the process and avoiding suspicion. Many property owners will logically have information regarding the development history of their homes not available from any other source.

Regulatory Activities

The potential review and updating of Article 13, much of which will by nature require public hearing, also offers a forum to discuss the importance of preservation in the retention of Talent's character. Such public meetings, hopefully coordinated with the survey process, again offer an opportunity to disseminate information regarding the role of the built environment in Talent.

The Design Guidelines that are suggested in Section 4.2., above, as a required element in the revision of Article 13 should be developed in such a way that they may be easily transmitted to potential developers, homeowners, and others seeking to build in the HD overlay zone. An illustrative "Best Practice to Unacceptable" manual that offers easily understood graphics of the standards as they relate to typical resource types has proven a highly successful method of directing development that is compatible with the goals of the City. For example, a standard requiring "compatible massing" might be illustrated via two streetscapes; one with the preferred in-fill building shown in comparable scale and volume to its surroundings, another with a larger, less compatible volume shown mid-block. Acceptable siding types, window designs, and other character-defining features could also be shown along with the graphic representations of non-acceptable practice in a series of easily understood examples. A wide variety of models for this type of design standard exist and have proven successful in other jurisdictions.⁴

Urban Renewal Agency

Although not specifically a preservation program, the activities of Talent's Urban Renewal Agency, focused on a 121.17 acre area that contains many of the City's currently designated historic resources and much of the larger HD zone, offers a timely opportunity for the city, operating as developer, to set the tone for subsequent private development that is consistent with the purpose of Article 13.

The mission statement of the Urban Renewal Agency recognizes the need to fulfill the City's larger goals ". . .in a manner which respects its historic past but recognizes the need for improved buildings, a greater mix of businesses and services and the development of people-pleasing amenities."⁵

⁴ Two local examples relative to historic resources are those of the City of Ashland and the City of Jacksonville.

⁵ Urban Renewal Agency, "Talent Urban Renewal Plan," Section 401, as adopted July 17, 1991 by City Ordinance No. 551.

Additional sections of the Urban Renewal document state the intent to “. . . maintain the ‘small town, country, [or] rural atmosphere in Talent’ [Section 405(A)5].

The existence of the Urban Renewal Agency and the funding mechanism it oversees, offers a timely strategy to restore, rehabilitate and, ultimately, re-invigorate, the historic commercial and residential resources identified by the City’s Comprehensive Plan. Coordination between these two arms of the city government should continue.

Informational

Regular city communications with the citizens of Talent, either via monthly utility billings or the Mayor’s regular newsletter, offer the opportunity to present interesting aspects of Talent’s history in an economic and widely accessible fashion. This process might also be accomplished via increased participation in the already extant *Talent Historical Society News*, published by the Society for its members on a quarterly basis. City participation could perhaps expand the distribution of one issue annually with articles, photos, or stories regarding Talent’s history, as well as code information or possible city-sponsored funding opportunities. This issue could be published during National Historic Preservation Week or at some other appropriate time. Proactive programs such as this work to enhance the understanding and appreciation of the role of historic resources in the community and thus constitute a beneficial opportunity for the city to shepherd development and remodeling that is consistent with the overall goals for the HD overlay early in the planning process.

4.4. ADDITIONAL PRESERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Community Center Restoration

Recent activities in the City of Talent offer superb opportunities to foster the understanding and promotion of historic preservation. The current effort to restore the Community Center, a designated resource under Article 13 (7), as with the Urban Renewal Agency’s program, provides an opportunity for the City to “set the standard” for development within the historic area of Talent. Continued city involvement and support of the Community Center restoration, including the investigation of various grant funding opportunities, is highly encouraged. The Historical Fund, an annual levy collected by Jackson County, is presently an untapped resource that might assist the City or the Talent Historical Society in such efforts.

Talent Enhancement Month

Talent Enhancement Month, day, an annual event that promotes the improvement of property through painting, removal of debris, and other general clean-up has proven successful. This program, augmented by design standards and guidance following the revision of Article 13 offers another proactive opportunity to maintain and improve the historic character of the community. The present awards for “most improved” might be expanded to recognize specific restoration efforts in addition to general enhancement.

Restoration Loan Program

The recently enacted “Restoration Loan” program of the Valley of the Rogue Bank, targeted to pre-WWII structures, is a valuable tool in promoting the restoration and rehabilitation of the city’s older areas in a manner that is compatible with the goals of Article 13. As above, revised and expanded design standards, will greatly assist in the coordinated impact of this program. Currently limited to a maximum of \$5000, efforts at gaining participation from additional lending institutions, up to and including a potential City-managed grants-in-aid or loan interest loan programs, possibly under the umbrella of the Urban Renewal Agency, should also be explored. Such work, in compliance with the intent of any Design Standards developed, would offer an tangible benefit to property owners while directing appropriate development that is consistent with Article 13.⁶

Publications

Working in concert with the Talent Historical Society, the Southern Oregon Historical Society, or other entities, the City might consider the publication of walking tour-type maps of the downtown area of Talent, documenting the location of significant buildings, both extant and demolished. Additionally, no formal history of Talent as an area has yet been published and such would add to the general understanding and appreciation of the community as a distinct entity. The information presented in Section 1.3. of this context is available to the city without expense and would logically lend itself to such a publication.

⁶ Other Oregon cities, most notably Eugene, have used CBDG monies to establish grants or low-interest programs to assist in the renovation and retention of significant resources.

Rehab Fairs and Training Sessions

Hands-on workshops, perhaps coordinated with other cities or agencies, would provide demonstrations of techniques and products appropriate for the restoration and rehabilitation of historic resources. Such a "Rehab Fair" would provide educational opportunity for both property owners and local contractors as well as an opportunity for the City to pro-actively guide potential restoration projects and transmit .. Presentations by vendors and contractors, typically available on a no-fee basis, could be coordinated by the City and offer positive examples of preferred alternatives that comply with the Design Standards suggested above.

4.5. FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Following the completion of the survey and inventory a variety of preservation opportunities may present themselves in Talent. Chief among these would be National Register of Historic Places listing of either a district, a thematic group, or individual resources as warranted. Briefly, these nomination formats are;

District:

A contiguous area of historic resources that retain high integrity and significance within the Talent vicinity. Examples might be an early residential area, the commercial core, or some similar *geographically contained area*.

Thematic/Multiple Property Submission:

A non-contiguous nomination of various individual resources located throughout the community that share some common thread relating the history and significance of the City of Talent. Examples may include pre-WWI structures that relate the founding of the city, transportation-related resources, or some other grouping of like-resources that are widely scattered.

Individual Nominations:

Specific individual properties may be of the significance and integrity to merit listing to the National Register of Historic Places on their own. Possible examples include the Talent School/Community Center, the A.P. Talent House, or surviving early commercial structures that date from the period of the city's incorporation.

In addition to the increased recognition and potential economic development aspects of National Register recognition,⁷ various financial incentive programs are available only to listed properties. Chief among these is the Federal "Certified Restoration Program," which extends a 20% investment tax credit to property owners who pursue restoration according to certain standards approved by the National Park Service. Other benefits of listing include the availability of design guidance through the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, potential relief from certain building code requirements, and increased access to assistance from organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation through, for example, the National Main Street Program or the Preservation Services Fund.

Until December 1993, the State of Oregon offered a Special Assessment benefit for Historic Properties that consisted of a 15-year property tax freeze on assessed value. While that program has ended and the current legislative agenda on this issue is uncertain, if and when any State preservation incentive is enacted listing on the National Register will assuredly be either a minimum requirement or a desirable influence upon participation.

Generally, individual nominations to the National Register of Historic Places are initiated and funded by the property owner. District or Thematic submission, encompassing numerous properties, are more commonly pursued by local government, a non-profit agency, or some other organization. Funding for such projects is available on a matching basis through the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, via a similar process as the one which funded this context statement.

⁷ The National Register is the body of properties which best represent the development of our nation's past and listing is accordingly considered an honor. Various studies have shown that history and historic sites have huge attraction for tourism and economic development and many communities actively seek National Register designation as a elemental component in commercial and residential revitalization. A good southern Oregon example is that of the City of Grants Pass and its recently recognized G Street Historic District.

APPENDIX A

The following is an exact replication of a short inventory prepared in 1973 by local historian Kay Atwood and then-Mayor of Talent, Granville Brittsan, as found in the Collection of the Southern Oregon Historical Society. It is presented for the information it contains as well as a 20-year old snapshot of Talent's historical resources.

Talent, Or.

Atwood/Brittsan
February 1, 1973.

1. Community Hall on Main Street was school (1898) and City Hall after closed as a school. Bell still in place.
2. Mill Site (logging) on Colver Road at edge of town
3. Large home on South Pacific Highway — Barkers lived there, one of the nicest older homes. Pink trim.
4. “Steve’s” was a feed store, on South Pacific Highway
5. “Talent Cafe” was an old candy and ice cream store
6. Brittsan’s Store, was Wolters, Name and date still on building {faces on Wagner Creek Road)
7. Between Wolters and the Estes House (to the north) was the hardware store
8. Perennially sinking chuck hole by Estes House was well for the Water tower, behind the hardware store
9. The Barbershop, Restaurant, and Real Estate Office which show in old pictures was on Wagner Creek running into Wolters
10. Blacksmith Shop was in vacant lot with trees, the sparks from this shop supposedly set on fire in 1911 that burned entire block
11. John Street and Wagner Creek. Large House, [Logan] with Water Tower that had a windmill. Housing for elderly will go into this and the house will be for sale. It would be worth preservation.
12. Depot was at Main and Front street, by the track on a large lot.
13. Main Street and Front. Large House which was a good hotel.

14. Front Street to the South, another large house which was a boarding house.
15. 2nd and Main. Old house, remodeled.
16. Old home. Across from Talent Elementary School
17. Many older homes along Wagner, across from side of school on way out of town.
18. Stearns Cemetery, on Anderson Creek Road, near Wagner
19. Burnett Foss Home. Very run down. On Anderson Creek. Brown Boards. ? tears off boards for firewood!
20. Baptist Church [Rapp] very old, completely redone
21. Methodist Church. Was Methodist Episcopal on Wagner, will possible [sic] be abandoned, could be redone
22. I Street, Withrow House. good condition, old.
23. South Pacific Highway toward Ashland. Van Dyke home, very nice condition, brown. Ranch House on the right.
24. E.K. Anderson's house was near Cemetery.
25. Beautiful red barn with good roof, at 714 South Pacific.
26. Beeson-Foss Home near Wagner and Anderson, Beeson Lane
27. Dunkard Cemetery by Shell Station, behind P.P. & L Equipment. Completely hidden by the plant.
28. Plaque at the corner of Rapp and Wagner. Irrigation History of Talent.