

# NAPOLEON NEWS

1905



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SECOND ISSUE

John Valen was born June 23, 1886 in northern Sweden. He was two and a half years old when he crossed the ocean with his mother and his older sister, Mary. His father had come to Council Bluffs, Iowa in June 1888 and worked in the Union Pacific shops to earn the money to send for his family. On the trip over, the hatches were left uncovered and when a big storm came up the vessel nearly flooded, but Mrs. Valen and her two children arrived at Castle Rock, New York in December 1888.

The family moved to Omaha, Nebraska and lived there until they moved to Ashland, Oregon in 1901. They came to Oregon because of the high wages paid on the Pacific coast—twenty cents an hour. In 1904 when John was just past eighteen, the family moved to Illinois Valley and John still lives there.

About thirty years ago John Valen was a County commissioner. John, with commissioner Richard McElligott and County Judge W. A. Johnson, was instrumental in getting the first fireproof Josephine County Hospital built. Until then the county had only a wooden hospital building.

Also John Valen and the other commissioners succeeded in getting the Merlin Irrigation project started. The commissioners, with Tom Pierce, Josephine County watermaster; Reed Carter, manager of the Grants Pass Irrigation District and Neil Allen, Grants Pass attorney, went to Salem to confer with Governor Sprague and also with the legislators on the ways and means committee. They succeeded in obtaining a state grant. Don Forrester, U. S. Reclamation Bureau representative, was in charge of the preliminary work on the project. The work stopped when World War II began.

John Valen was one of the organizers of the Josephine County Historical Society. For many years local history has been one of John's hobbies. Many people come to him for historical information. Following is the story of his first trip to Crescent City:

## FROM TAKILMA TO CRESCENT CITY IN 1905

by John Valen

The first time I went to Crescent City was in 1905. I walked all the way there and back. I wanted to see the Pacific Ocean. I had seen it, before that, at a National Guard encampment up toward Tacoma, but I wanted to see it again, so Harry Phillips and I decided to go to Crescent City.

Harry Phillips had a short neck and he was very strong. He was called Foo Goy. That was his nickname. One day we were all lifting, up at Takilma, to see who could lift the most. There was a drill bit there that weighed seven hundred pounds. None of the rest of us could lift it, but Harry Phillips went out there and picked it up and lifted it. But he was awkward. I saw him

get in a fight with a fellow one time-Kameel Khoery. He made a pass at Kameel Khoery and fell down. He got in a fight with Ed Basie one time and Ed Basie knocked him down two or three times, but it didn't do any good. Finally Harry just crawled along the ground and got a hold of Ed's leg and started crawling up on Ed Basie. Ed panicked and he screamed, "Take him off! Take him off!! Take him off!!!"

We started to Crescent City from Takilma, Harry and I. We took a quilt apiece, and we had maybe a dollar or two between the two of us. We started up Oregon Mountain and on over and went down into Elkhorn Mine. The road to Elkhorn Mine takes off somewhere on the road on Oregon Mountain. We stopped at Monumental and bought something to eat for a quarter from the cookhouse at the mine. We got some big beef sandwiches and I remember they gave us a great big Apricot pie and it was the best thing ever. Oh, but it was good! We were hungry too.

I had on a pair of shoes, pretty good heavy shoes and they had thick soles. Harry took a pair of dancing pumps, thin, you know, almost as thin as paper. He said he could put them on and walk all the better. Well, he walked that day with those dancing pumps on and that night he could hardly use his feet.

The first night we camped where the big Redwoods started. We measured around them with our arms. That was the first time I'd seen the Redwoods, the first time. They're big trees. I'll tell the world they are. We camped out that night in the Redwoods. We'd done pretty good the first day.

We got up early the next morning and started for Crescent City. As we were walking along we met a young fellow coming through the woods, riding on a mule, a little mule. The fellow was weaving around and swaying. He was drunk. The fellow said, "Hello Boys, where y' goin'?"

"Oh," we said, "we're going to Crescent City."

"Well," he said, "I've got a little bottle of whiskey. I'll give y' a drink." So he pulled out a little pint bottle of whiskey and we had to drink with him. Then the fellow said, "Well Boys, I'm glad to meet you." He said, "I've got to get back. I've got a job up here." And he reached in his pocket and he said, "Here's sixty cents. That's all the money I've got." We hadn't asked him for anything. He said, "Here, you take that and



when you get to Crescent City you can buy some kind of a lunch." So we did.

I never was used to drinking any, you know. That drink of whiskey just pepped me up. I was stepping so high that my knees were brushing my ears. But Harry, it made him dull. He could hardly walk. I ran off and left him, practically.

When we got to Crescent City I tried to get a job on the little Del Norte steamer, that hauled lumber. I was kind of glad I didn't get it because when we went down on the wharf we heard the captain shouting to the men as they were loading lumber: "What you wanna load that this way for? You wanna stove this ship?"

We went out to Pebble Beach, walked out there, and we came back and went out into the logging woods. We got permission from the engineer of the train to ride the cow catcher out to the woods. We rode the cow catcher out to try to get a logging job in the woods and we couldn't get a job. Times were tough in 1905.

The first night in Crescent City we slept out in a field off from where the big mill was in Crescent City, Hobbs-Wall mill.

That was my first trip to Crescent City. The streets were just alive with Indian squaws marked on the chin with the three tattoo marks (called one eleven). The squaws were walking up and down the street. They wore those calico dresses, blue and clear down to their heels, you know. We didn't see many Indian men, but we saw lots of women.

Coming home we slept one night beside the road and one night in a big old barn. The night we slept in the barn we fixed our beds and went to sleep, and we woke up that night and great big spiders were crawling all over us, both of us. We were just loaded with spiders. It was the most eerie feeling you could imagine. It was too dark to leave so we brushed the spiders off and went back to sleep. We kept waking up and as soon as it was daylight we got out of there.

It took us five days to make the round trip. That was pretty good at that. The trip back seemed awful long. It was more uphill but we managed to make it. We each had a quilt as I said. We had a few dollars, dang few too 'cause wages were only twenty cents an hour at that time if you could get a job.

At that time Crescent City was the dinkiest town you ever saw.



There were very few painted buildings. Crescent City in 1905 and today are two different towns.

#### TAKILMA

The business of the miners who worked at the copper mines and the Queen of Bronzes smelter was the principal reason for the town. The settlement at Takilma started in the early 1900's. The postoffice was established in 1904 with George F. Morgan as the postmaster. The town was called Takilma, a modification of Takelma, the name of an Indian tribe that lived in the area.

#### CRESCENT CITY

The earliest histories of Crescent City and Josephine County are very closely related; as most of the supplies for northern California and southern Oregon were shipped by water to Crescent City and packed or hauled inland. In September 1852 a party of Illinois Valley men "outfitted" at an Althouse Creek store and opening the trail for their pack animals as they traveled, went to Crescent City for the purpose of establishing a town, already having knowledge of the bay. Six years later the first road was opened. This was a toll road, now called the McGrew trail. In 1882 William J. Wimer of Waldo took over this road and built about twenty miles of new road eliminating the worst part of the McGrew road. In 1887 Horace Gasquet finished building his toll road. This Gasquet road was the route that these two young men, John Valen and Harry Philips traveled in 1905 on their Crescent City trip. The toll had been discontinued several years before. This road is still maintained and passable.

The only transportation between Crescent City and Illinois Valley in 1905 was by stagecoach, wagon, horseback or walking. In 1904 the first automobile was brought to Grants Pass by way of the Crescent City road, but it was hauled on a wagon pulled by horses.

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The Kerbyville Museum is open 7 days a week from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. The regular season is from the first of May to the first of November. The museum will open in the winter by appointment. For an appointment phone either Grants Pass 476-5898 or Cave Junction 3161 or 3431.

To join the Historical Society send your \$3.00 membership fee to:  
Josephine County Historical Society  
Box 34, Kerby, Oregon 97531



This is the second issue of Napoleon News. The name of Kerbyville was changed to Napoleon by act of the state legislature in 1859. The name was not popular but it was never changed back by the legislature. Therefore the town of Kerby is still legally named Napoleon, hence Napoleon News.



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