

CURRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MONTHLY BULLETIN

April 1974

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Minnie King Jolly                Mary Woodruff

Harriet & Gladys Payne, Pioneers of the Month  
"Lone Ranch Borax Mine" by John McWade  
Minnie King Jolly

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NEXT MEETING: Our April meeting will be held in Gold Beach High School, rooms 20-21, on Tuesday, April 16, 7:30 p.m. Our speaker will be Dr. Joel Berreman of Brookings. He will show pictures and tell about the archeological excavations at Lone Ranch which he participated in in the 1930's. The Lone Ranch area is located between Gold Beach and Brookings. Dr. Berreman moved to Curry County several years ago after retiring from the University of Oregon.  
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LAST MEETING: 93 people were in attendance at our March meeting held in the Chetco Grange Hall in Brookings. Howard Newhouse presented a slide program on ships and shipwrecks along the Curry County Coast. John Adams, 94 years of age and one of Curry County's oldest pioneers, was present and his narrative of a 1912 game warden's patrol in Curry County was read and plotted on a county map.  
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MUSEUM PROGRESS: The siding is on the outside and it looks super. Take a look as you drive by the fairgrounds. It's on the north end and you can't miss it. Our heaters arrived last week and were installed. We think we've located some really neat barn boards. Should know for sure by next week. We've had about a dozen members turn out for our work parties when we put the siding on. A special thanks goes to Walt Schroeder who has been in charge of the remodeling of our building. He has been spending several hours each weekend working on the building. Please contact him if you would like to help, as he wants to be finished before fishing season!  
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WE WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME TWO MORE LIFE MEMBERS to the Curry County Historical Society. They are Mr. H. W. Gauntlett of Newport, Oregon, and Mr. Allen H. Boice, of Gold Beach.

We now have 249 paid-up members for 1974. Of these, 237 are adults, and 12 are students. We should be over 250 by our meeting next week. Why not help us?

I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CURRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOR 1974

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

MINNIE KING JOLLY - Continued

Minnie moved back to Curry County in 1955 exactly 50 years to the day after leaving Curry County.

Minnie was very interested in history and had a collection of materials that could provide data for several books. She was a member of the Board of the Curry County Historical Society, and was also active in the Coos-Curry Pioneer Historical Society, Port Orford Chamber of Commerce, Jetty Jubilee Celebration Committee, and several other organizations. She was the committee chairman for the re-publication of the Dodge History.

We all feel a loss with Minnie's passing.

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LONE RANCH BORAX MINE

By John McWade

Southern Curry County's Lone Ranch Creek held high hopes for early day prospectors. It was not gold but borate of lime that promised great wealth. In 1857, John Cresswell took up a homestead on the bench land just south of Cape Ferrello near the mouth of Lone Ranch Creek. Here he raised sheep and cattle as a means of livelihood and cut timber from the adjacent hills for his building needs.

It was Cresswell who noted a white, chalky substance which outcropped along the creek. Housewives found it excellent for polishing silver, and boat builders and carpenters used it as a substitute for chalk. Someone sent a sample of the material to the California Academy of Science in 1872 where Dr. Silliman pronounced it a new mineral. He named it "priceite" after Thomas Price, a well-known San Francisco metallurgist.

Actually, it is the same material as the borate of lime mined commercially in Turkey and called "pandermite." The Oregon priceite is found in areas of serpentine rock and comes in hard snow white nodules varying in size from a pea to 500 pounds or more. Upon being exposed to the weather, it breaks down rapidly to a powder. It is therefore a miracle that it was ever discovered in Oregon's wet coastal climate.

No particular significance was attached to this borate at the time of its identification, but in 1890 an Englishman named Fleming came across the record of the assay, took a mineral option on the ranch and opened up the deposit. He later allowed the options to lapse and the Pacific Coast Borax Company purchased the 1056 acre ranch. They proceeded with the development of the mine and began shipments in 1891. From the tunnels, which faced a little bay and were only a few yards above the high tide line, the ore was mined and temporarily stored in a large shed. It was then lowered to a barge through a wooden chute, towed a mile out to sea and transferred to a coastal steamer bound for the refinery at San Francisco. The first shipment was made on the steamer "NEWSBOY" in 1890. A large rock, just north of the mouth of Lone Ranch Creek bears the marks of the spar and heel boom used in the loading operation.

In an area decidedly remote at the time, the mining operations were entrusted to contractors or leaseholders. Each would be assigned a small tract of perhaps two or three acres. Miners were paid according to their production.

A price of \$23.00 per ton was paid for ore delivered on the barge. This must have represented a good return to the miners for rivalries oft times arose and stories of strife and gunfire were not unknown, as a drift, perhaps inadvertently, proceeded out in to a neighbor's lease. Tunnel entrances were generally kept locked to prevent theft and inspection. But in the absence of a leaseholder, his padlock would sometimes be shot off, measurements of his tunnel made, trespass proven and war declared, all in the passing of an hour.

Mining was extremely difficult and dangerous because of the slippery nature of the steatite and serpentine in which the nodules of ore occurred. By the end of 1892, after only one thousand tons had been removed, operations were permanently discontinued. This was partly due to the fact that the priceite could not be economically refined to a useable product.

The mining site reverted to sheep range and was ranched by several leaseholders including the Isenhart family of Langlois. The Isenharts ran stock on the ranch from 1925 until 1948. They even grew some lilies during the early 1940's.

Mr. Isenhart recalls that during World War II the Coast Guard dynamited the largest remaining mine tunnel. This was a 70 foot tunnel that was near the present access to Long Ranch picnic spot. The military was afraid the tunnel could become a fortification if Japanese landing craft were to use Lone Ranch beach.

Isenhart also remembers the group of young archeologists from Stanford University who made extensive diggings in the Indian campsite and shell mounds near the creek. Hundreds of stone implements and utensils, bone fish hooks, needles and other artifacts were uncovered and catalogued. At least thirty four Indian skeletons were noted. Dr. Joel Berreman, whose home is near the Thomas Creek Bridge, was among those present during the digging. His research paper is on file in the Curry County Library.

The Borax Consolidated Limited, predecessor to United States Borax and Chemical Corp., donated that portion of their holdings lying west of Highway 101 to Samuel H. Boardman State Park. The remaining 664 acres east of the Highway is "just too beautiful to be commercially developed" so says their company officials. We wholeheartedly agree.

April 1974

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WANTED: Any information anyone has on Rogue River Indians in Curry County or about any of the Klamath Indian women brought here in the 1850's and their descendents. Who were they? Where and how did they live? What happened to them and their families? Does anyone have pictures? Please phone John Mather, 247-6216, or write to him in Gold Beach.  
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YOUR MEMORIAL GIFT is a thoughtful gift of lasting value. Not only do you offer tribute to the memory of a friend, relative, or associate, but you also provide a service to preserve the historical heritage of the county, state and nation.

Your gift will be acknowledged to the family, but the amount will not be disclosed if you wish. A receipt will be sent to you for your tax-exempt contribution.