

History Of Table Rock Area

Recorded By Former Teacher

By *Charleen Thomas*

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Rising from the Rogue River Valley floor, two flat surfaced mountains stand sentinel overlooking a community north of Medford known as Table Rock.

Changing in beauty with each nuance of the day, Upper and Lower Table Rocks present the solidarity of their cliffides to the surrounding inhabitants of the land where Indians once camped. Before that, geologists say, the earth moved in violence, the sea retreated and the mountains were born.

Mrs. Ernest P. Leavitt, whose father Stephen M. Nealon, moved to Table Rock from Connecticut in 1883, has compiled a history of the Table Rock district, enriched with a love for the hills, the valley and its people.

As a member of the historical committee of the Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department, Mrs. Leavitt has had occasion to search for old records available in the court house and local libraries. Mrs. Neil Ledward, reference librarian at the Public Library of Medford and Jackson County, encouraged her to make a record of her knowledge of the Table Rock community.

"I first began to think seriously about it a little over a year ago when Mrs. Frank Myers, once clerk of the old school district at Table Rock, moved into a mobile home and stored the records she had kept with my sister," Mrs. Leavitt said.

"Everyone in my family writes, except me, and I feel some were more qualified to do the history; however, they encouraged me to do it and suddenly after a year of hard work, here it is," she noted.

Mrs. Leavitt's sister, Mrs. Moore (Eva) Hamilton, is a staff writer for the Mail Tribune, and her brother, R. E. Nealon, until recently wrote a column for the Mail Tribune entitled "Table Rock Tablets."

Mrs. Leavitt recalls when the late A. C. Howlett, a minister from Eagle Point and an assistant pastor at the Table Rock Sunday School many years ago, wrote a column for the Mail Tribune, "The Eagle Point Eaglets." The two columnists, Nealon and Howlett, according to Mrs. Leavitt, sometimes came to rather heated differences of opinion on various subjects.

Titled "History of Table Rock," compiled by Katherine Nealon Huntress Leavitt, the document includes geological data contributed by Norman V. Peterson, State Department of Geology and Mineral Industry, Grants Pass; information concerning the Indian tribes who were early inhabitants of Table Rock; a chronology of the early orchardists in the area; establishment of the school and post office; and information about families who settled in Table Rock before and during the early 1900s.

Adding much to the readability of the history are the personal touches Mrs. Leavitt contributes. The description of the first Christmas Tree — a tradition still carried on in the old school house each year — enlivens nostalgic memories for many readers.

Three copies of the history have been prepared, and donated to the Public Library of Medford and Jackson County, the Jacksonville Museum and the Central Point Branch Library.

The book contains many reproductions of old family photographs. Joanie Oliver, a teacher's aide at Washington School in Medford, drew her conception of Indian Chiefs Joe and Sam from a description of them found in A. G. Wallings' History of Southern Oregon Counties. These drawings are included in the history.

Maj. Gen. J. H. Hicks, Medford, contributed information on birds of the area. In identifying flora and fauna found on the Rocks, Mrs. Leavitt said she feels secure in their accuracy, since she has a great love for the out-of-doors and "followed the naturalists of the Park Service around whenever possible." Her husband, the late Ernest P. Leavitt, was superintendent of Crater Lake National Park. In the history, Mrs. Leavitt describes a trip to Crater Lake in 1908 made in a caravan of three wagons and one hack by members of the Nealon, Reid and Beebe families. of Table Rock.

Mrs. Leavitt, who resides on the Old Stage Road, Central Point, retired in 1965 after 26½ years teaching in Medford and Central Point schools. The last four years were spent at Jewett Elementary School in Central Point where, "when I would look at the sun shining on the Table Rocks, while on playground duty on winter days, I would feel warmer," she smiled.



Mrs. Ernest P. Leavitt, who has compiled a history of the Table Rock district and presented it to the Medford and Jackson County Libraries, is shown at the recent library open house in Central Point discussing the book with Mr. and Mrs. William Snyder. Snyder is extension librarian for the library system. Three copies of the book are available, one each in the Medford and Central Point libraries, and one in the Jacksonville Museum.

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SECTION B

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PAGES 1 TO 10



Along with the work of the day, the men also found some time for recreation and baseball was a popular sport. Table Rock's pre-World War I championship ball team was composed of, back row, left to right, Earl May, Darwin Phillips, Clark Collins, Stanley Lydiard, Carl Beebe and Lawrence Fitzpatrick; front row, Albert Kilburn, John Nealon, J. E. (Ed) Vincent and Verne Pendleton.



An old picture of the Table Rocks caused Mrs. Leavitt, whose home commands a view of them, to say, "When I would look at the sun shining on the Table Rocks on winter days, I would feel warmer." Mrs. Leavitt's father, Stephen M. Nealon, moved to Table Rock from Connecticut by way of Georgia in 1883 and his descendants have lived there since.



This picture, Mrs. Leavitt says, is her favorite. It was loaned by Mrs. W. E. Thomas, Medford. Shown in the back row, left to right, are Effie Sage, Tom Perdue, Lester Wertz, Eva Hall, John Wilson, Emmett Nealon; middle row, John Nealon, Mary Nealon, Cleve Wilson and Alberta Stacy; bottom row, Ellie Sage, Flora Stacy, Carl Beebe, Blanch Collins and Loren Gregory.



On Feb. 22, 1913, members of the Arrowhead Literary Society, Table Rock, observed Washington's birthday with a celebration. Shown, left to right, were Clara Collins, Effie Sage, Hazel Byrum, Ruth Hall, Fay DeFord, George Myers, Clark Collins, Emmett Nealon, John Nealon and J. E. (Ed) Vincent.