BUTTONS AND BALLOON BOMBS
Each weekend enjoy hands-on activities and engaging programs highlighting one of five different themes: Native American Lifeways, Pioneer Lifeways, Late 19th-Century Farm Life, Early 20th-Century Farm Life, and Old-Fashioned Holidays. House and garden tours are offered each day. Wagon tours of the farm are available on Saturdays and Sundays on Pioneer, Late 19th- and Early 20th-Century weekends. Bring a picnic and spend the day—there’s plenty to see and do for families of all ages! And, you’ll be able to buy fresh farm produce on Sundays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Hanley Farm Farmers’ Market.

AUGUST 2, 3, & 4
Early 20th Century Farm Life

Members of the Early Day Gas Engine and Tractor Association, branch 141, will display tractors and provide tractor-pulled wagon tours on Saturday and Sunday. The Rogue Valley A’s (Model A Ford Car Club) will visit Saturday. A botany workshop for kids will be presented from 1 - 2 p.m. on Saturday. At the Hanley Farmers’ Market, purchase fresh produce on Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.!

AUGUST 9, 10, & 11
Pioneer Lifeways—Soap & Candles

The Southern Oregon Draft Horse Association will provide horse-drawn wagon tours on Saturday and Sunday. There will be woodworking demonstrations on Saturday from 1 - 4 p.m. Soapmaking, candlemaking, weaving, and spinning demonstrations will be featured on Saturday and Sunday. Fresh farm produce can be purchased between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Sunday at the Farmers’ Market.

AUGUST 16, 17, & 18
Native American Lifeways—Tools

Tom Smith, cultural interpreter and member of the Southern Oregon Indian Center, will demonstrate traditional tool making and flintknapping. Explore the traditions and culture of the first peoples who lived here through hands-on activities and displays. Purchase fresh produce between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at the Farmers’ Market.

AUGUST 23, 24, & 25
Late 19th Century Farm Life—Haying

You will have an opportunity to try your hand at embroidery with the Southern Oregon Stitchers, and discover how to quilt with the Mountain Star Quilters on Friday from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The Southern Oregon Draft Horse Association will demonstrate the use of a turn-of-the-century hay-baling press and provide horse-drawn wagon tours on Saturday and Sunday. There will be woodworking and blacksmith demonstrations on Saturday; weaving and spinning demonstrations on Sunday. “Make a New Buddy”—miniature horse Buddy and his owner will talk some horse sense to youngsters. Don’t forget to purchase your fresh produce from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Farmers’ Market!

AUGUST 30, 31, & SEPTEMBER 1
Old-fashioned Labor Day Holiday

Bring your family and friends and take advantage of reduced admission at Hanley Farm—only $1 per person, ages 6 and up! Pack a picnic and take part in the festivities. The Old Time Fiddlers will provide foot-stomping, hand-clapping tunes on both Saturday and Sunday from noon to 3 p.m. Have you ever tasted roasted corn? Everyone who sampled it last year can’t wait to have another piece. The Hanley Farmers’ Market will be open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. for purchase of fresh produce.

Hanley Farm Summer Season 2002
Feature

"Terror on the Wind: Southern Oregon's Tragic Connection to the Fu-Go Project of World War II"
by Laura J. Gifford

Departments

Pioneer Biography
Lawrence L. Powell: A Pioneer for all Seasons
by Patricia Parish Kuhn

From the Collection
Collecting Antique Buttons
by Mary Ames Sheret

Sunday Driving
Onion Mountain Lookout
by Loren Pryor

Marjorie O'Hara and the late Lawrence Powell examine bound volumes of the Ashland Daily Tidings at Powell's Ashland home.

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2

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Things to Do:
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6

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15

On the Cover
A nicely executed balloon motif makes this fine example of a nineteenth century button very collectable. The two examples above date from the early 1900s.
With the recent passing of Lawrence Leroy Powell, the community of Ashland lost a historian, a teacher, a hiker, and a friend. A modest man of eclectic interests, Powell’s love of the outdoors and hiking was legend. “I’ve climbed all the peaks in this region. Even climbed Mount Shasta twice,” he said.

There probably isn’t a creek, hill, or valley in the area that Powell didn’t explore.

Community-minded and dedicated to his family, Powell continued to contribute right up to his death on March 31, at age ninety-four. He credited his good health to a lifetime of walking, clean air, good food, and good genes. He was able to continue walking almost a mile a day until he was over ninety.

Born to Benjamin and Julia Horning Powell on January 31, 1908, in Marlow, Oklahoma, Powell was four years old when the family journeyed west by train to Reno, Nevada; by narrow-gauge railroad as far as Alturas, California; and by horse-drawn stagecoach to Lakeview. His father, unable to find suitable land in Lakeview through the Homestead Act, bought a covered wagon and team and headed for the Rogue Valley by way of the Applegate Trail and the Greensprings Road to Ashland.

Powell recalled that shortly after the family’s arrival in the Rogue Valley, construction began on Lithia Park in 1914 on the former site of a flour mill, planing mill, and electric light plant. Lithia water was bottled and promoted for its alleged healthful qualities, and many Ashland families in those days sold eggs, berries, and fruit to the Ashland Fruit & Produce Association, which then shipped the produce to Oakland, California.

It was when Powell became editor of Ashland High School’s newspaper in the mid-1920s that, while trying to design a new banner for the paper, his eyes rested on lovely Grizzly Peak beyond the football field; a grizzly bear theme would do just fine. It became the now-famous Ashland High School team name and mascot.

Powell graduated from Ashland High in 1928, a one-year delay due to an accident. While riding his bicycle down Scenic Drive from the family home at 196 Nutley Street, a car backed out of a driveway, colliding with Powell’s bicycle and breaking his leg. Extensive hospitalization and complications in the leg’s healing nearly caused his death. His slow recovery set him back a year at school. However, while in the hospital, he met a visitor, Altadena Charlotte Spencer, granddaughter of a local homesteader. They married on August 10, 1929.

After graduating in 1930 with his sister, Ruby, from Southern Oregon Normal School (now Southern Oregon University) and following the birth of a second daughter, he and his wife accepted teaching positions at Coos Bay, then called Marshfield, where Powell taught history for two years at Bunker Hill School. They later returned to Ashland to raise three daughters, Constance, Carol, and Julia, who all attended Lincoln School.

Among the jobs he held at this time, he said he only lasted a few days with the Works Progress Administration, which was building the road to Mount Ashland.

He began work for the postal service as a mail carrier in 1934. As World War II expanded to the Pacific Theater, Powell and his wife became local air raid wardens, as a part of the civil defense effort the government organized along the West Coast. Like so many other Americans during the war years, they planted a “victory garden” to supplement what they were able to purchase with their food and gasoline ration books.

When Powell left his carrier route to become a postal clerk, he enjoyed answering questions about Ashland while selling stamps. It was during this time his daughter, Julia, recalls, that he stepped into his role as historian. The friendships forged there remained with him all his life.

An avid photographer, Powell developed an early love for silent films and often filmed his family with his 16mm camera. Practicing hymns from the Methodist hymnal, Powell learned to play the pump organ at home. He would play the organ for church services and it would not be long, his daughter recalls, before he turned to the theater organ for entertainment and modest profit.

“Local movie palaces were lucky to have a local lad eager to play exciting background music for otherwise silent films,” she said.

Powell’s interest in projectors would lead him to take on a second job as projectionist for Ashland’s local movie theaters, where he could continue into the 1960s. “I started (at the Varsity) during the war when there was a labor shortage and liked it so well, I stayed on,” Powell recalled.

Powell also had a strong interest in natural history, and in the health of the local forest. In 1959, a wildfire swept over the eastern hills and down into the Ashland watershed. Powell, his wife, “Dena,” and daughter, Julia, raced to Nutley Street to evacuate his parents and their possessions. Their house was spared with a shift of the wind. Julia recalls that before the ashes had cooled, her father was hiking up Strawberry Lane to survey the damage. It was then he began a voluntary thirty-year conservatorship of the mountain, she recalls.

As soon as the blackened timbers had cooled, he was rolling them into position to support the road to prevent the decomposed granite from eventually flowing down the hill into Ashland Creek. He collected cones from remaining trees and nurtured the seeds. Many of the evergreen trees now growing on either side of Strawberry Lane trail were planted, protected, and tended by Powell, the family remembers.

In the early sixties Powell bought a 1950 Willys Jeep, with which he spent weekends exploring the nooks and crannies of Southern Oregon. Twice on his journeys, he found remains of incendiary balloons sent over the West...
Lawrence Powell pauses by a rock outcrop on one of his many exploring trips into the remote corners of Southern Oregon, circa 1966. Powell often wore two hats when exploring so he had a spare if anyone with him needed one.

Coast by Japan during World War II. He located several campsites used by Chinese laborers during the building of the railroad tunnels through the Siskiyous. He tracked the wagon route up from the Colesin Valley over Mount Ashland's shoulder and down toward Emigrant Creek. The route has been subsequently posted to designate the trail.14

A practiced photographer, having learned his camera skills from his father, Powell took hundreds of images during his explorations to record when he was and found.4 Because of his focus on history, the camera, and his family, his descendants possess a ninety-year chronicle of his life in Ashland.

Retirement from the Postal Service in October 1969 allowed Powell to allot more time to his interests: Southern Oregon Normal School Alumni Association, Ashland High Alumni Association, Stamp Club, and the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

On December 31, 1982, his wife of fifty-three years died. He had helped her achieve one of her ambitions in 1973 to launch a quilt show, in part to benefit the Swedenburg House by proving it was useful to the community and thus halting the college's plan to remodel or tear it down.15 In 1986, Powell married Ruth Zediker whom he met at the Post Card Club over her peanut butter cookies, which he said were the best he ever ate.

Shortly before his death on March 31, the First Methodist Church of Ashland was to celebrate Heritage Sunday. As the church's oldest member, Powell had planned to share a story about another of his early responsibilities: building the fire in the wood stove which was then the only source of heat in the church.16 But it would be his beloved family who would tell his story this time.

Powell's nephew, Thomas Kerr, says of his late uncle: "In all likelihood, he was the last pioneer to walk along the very last wagon train to come west. He was a remarkable man: a photographer, historian, genealogist, scholar, lifelong teacher, artist, and archaeologist to recount just a few of his pursuits and accomplishments. He was known as 'Mr. Ashland.'"

Powell never lost his sense of curiosity and keen lifelong love of learning alive to the very end. "Six months ago he called to ask me if he would benefit from purchasing a computer!" Kerr recalls.17

Patricia Parish Kuhn is a freelance writer living in Medford.

ENDNOTES:
1. Author interview with Lawrence Powell, Ashland, 15 September 1999.
2. Memorial tribute given at Lawrence Powell's memorial service at the First Methodist Church, Ashland, 11 April 2002, compiled by Lawrence Powell's daughter, Julia Powell Woosnam, with contributions from his family. A copy of the memorial tribute provided by the Reverend Michael Powell, First Methodist Church of Ashland.
3. Author interview with Powell.
4. Ibid.
5. Memorial tribute.
6. Ibid.
8. Memorial tribute.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Author interview with Powell.
12. Memorial tribute.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Author interview with Powell's nephew, Thomas Michael Kerr, Medford, 8 April 2002.
**Southern Oregon Historical Society**

**Things To Do in August**

**PROGRAMS:** (see listings below for complete descriptions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Craft of the Month</th>
<th><strong>DATE &amp; TIME</strong></th>
<th><strong>LOCATION</strong></th>
<th><strong>DESCRIPTION</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beekman Living History Program</td>
<td>Wed. - Sun., 1 - 5 p.m.</td>
<td>CHILDREN'S MUSEUM</td>
<td>Toys to Remember; families; $25c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanley Farm</td>
<td>Fri., Sat., Sun., 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.</td>
<td>1053 HANLEY ROAD, Central Point</td>
<td>Enter 1911: adults, $3; ages 6-12 &amp; seniors 65+, $2; ages 5 &amp; under and members, free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PROGRAM DETAILS**

For times and locations, see schedule above.

**AUGUST CRAFT OF THE MONTH**

**Toys to Remember**

Create a Victorian Buzz Saw and learn how to make it buzz-z-z! Put together a Tumbling Acrobat and watch him tumble! Make a Thaumatrope and spin it to find out what an optical illusion is! Make one or all three of these traditional Victorian toys and enjoy hours of simple fun. Children's Museum.

**BEEKMAN LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM**

Step back in time to the year 1911 and enjoy a visit with costumed interpreters portraying Cornelius C. Beekman (Jacksonville's first banker), and other members of his family.

**HISTORIC HANLEY FARM EVENTS**

Enjoy hands-on activities and engaging programs highlighting one of five different themes. Tour the house and gardens. Take a wagon ride. Bring a picnic lunch! Purchase fresh farm produce on Sundays (11 a.m. - 3 p.m.) at the Hanley Farmers' Market.

**AUGUST 2, 3, & 4:**

**Early 20th Century Farm Life**

Members of the Early Days Gas Engine and Tractor Association will display tractors and provide tractor-pulled wagon tours of Hanley Farm on Saturday and Sunday. The Rogue Valley A's (Model A Ford Car Club) will visit Saturday. A botany workshop for kids will be presented Saturday from 1 - 2 p.m.

**AUGUST 9, 10, & 11:**

**Pioneer Lifeways - Soap and Candles**

On Saturday: woodworking demonstrations, 1 - 4 p.m. On Saturday and Sunday: soapmaking and candle making demonstrations; weaving and spinning; and the Southern Oregon Draft Horse Association will provide horse-drawn wagon tours.

**AUGUST 16, 17, & 18:**

**Native American Lifeways - Tools**

Tom Smith, cultural interpreter and member of Southern Oregon Indian Center, will demonstrate traditional toolmaking and flintknapping. Explore the traditions and culture of the first peoples who lived here through hands-on activities and displays.

**AUGUST 23, 24, & 25:**

**Late 19th Century Farm Life - Haymaking**

Try your hand at embroidery with the Southern Oregon Stitchers and discover how to quilt with the Mountain Star Quilters on Friday from 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Southern Oregon Draft Horse Association will demonstrate use of a turn-of-the-century hay-baling press and provide horse-drawn wagon tours, Saturday and Sunday. Woodworking and blacksmith demonstrations on Saturday; weaving and spinning on Sunday.

**HANLEY BARN & GARDEN LECTURE SERIES**

Free with admission. Fridays, 2 - 3 p.m. Preregister by calling (541) 773-6536.

**AUGUST 2:**

**Tools & Techniques of Archaeology**

**AUGUST 9:**

**Wagon Trail Gardens - Pioneer Women & Victorian Ladies**

**AUGUST 16:**

**Native Traditions - Yesterday and Today**

**AUGUST 23:**

**Closets, Cupboards & Correspondence**

Hanley Farm Youth Programming for ages 3-6 provides storytelling for one-half hour at 1 p.m. each Friday.

Children in the Garden: August 3 Workshop, ages 7-11, 1 - 2 p.m. Free with admission; participants must preregister by calling (541) 773-6536.

Master Gardener Claire White presents botany for children. Explore the Hanley gardens and learn a lot about plants!
### EXHIBITS: (see listings below for complete descriptions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Century of Photography: 1856-1956</th>
<th><strong>LOCATION</strong></th>
<th><strong>MUSEUM HOURS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The History of Southern Oregon from A to Z</td>
<td>HISTORY CENTER</td>
<td>Mon. - Fri., 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History in the Making: Jackson County Milestones</td>
<td>JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM</td>
<td>Wed. - Sat., 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miner, Baker, Furniture Maker</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sunday, noon - 5 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics of Culture: Collecting the Southwest-Art &amp; History</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crater Lake: Picture Perfect</td>
<td>CHILDREN'S MUSEUM</td>
<td>Wed.- Sat., 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sunday, noon - 5 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing 'hands on history' exhibits</td>
<td>3RD STREET ARTISANS' STUDIO</td>
<td>Saturdays, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Exhibit Details

**FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS, SEE SCHEDULE ABOVE.**

**CENTURY OF PHOTOGRAPHY: 1856-1956**

Highlights the work of two area photographers, Peter Britt and James Verne Shangle, with cameras from the Society’s collection.

**THE HISTORY OF SOUTHERN OREGON FROM A TO Z**

Do you know your ABC’s of Southern Oregon history? Even local oldtimers might learn a thing or two from the History Center windows along Sixth and Central as each letter of the alphabet tells a different story.

“HISTORY IN THE MAKING: JACKSON COUNTY MILESTONES”

Be sure to take in this exhibit of ten major milestones in Jackson County’s history. An abundance of artifacts and photographs, from Chinese archaeological material to an early cellular telephone, tell the county’s story. Not everything is behind glass—a working 1940s jukebox plays vintage automobile songs, and a DVD player reproduces historic film clips.

**MINER, BAKER, FURNITURE MAKER**

Explores the development of the Rogue Valley and the impact the industrial revolution had on the settlement of Oregon.

**POLITICS OF CULTURE: Collecting the Southwest-Art & History**

Cultural history of local tribes and information on contemporary collecting issues. Objects from the Society’s Southwest Native American collection highlight ancient Anasazi and historic Pueblo pottery. Textiles include two Navajo women’s dresses, a Navajo Germantown blanket, and a Hopi/Pueblo “maiden’s shawl.”

**CRATER LAKE: PICTURE PERFECT**

A photographic essay celebrating the centennial year of the founding of Crater Lake National Park.

**CHILDREN’S MUSEUM**

Everyone enjoys exploring the home and work settings from the 1850s to the 1930s through “hands-on-history.”

**BLACK/WHITE & SOMETIMES GRAY**

Members of Rogue Valley Handweavers, Far Out Fibers and the Saturday Handweavers Guild will be demonstrating the traditional art forms of spinning and weaving. Black, white, and gray textiles will be on display.

**HISTORIC OPEN HOUSE LISTINGS:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - shpo.state.or.us
  - click on “publication”
  - PHONE: 503-378-4168
- Southern Oregon Historical Society
  - PHONE: 541-773-6536

### Southern Oregon Historical Society Sites

**Phone:** (541) 773-6536

**Fax:** (541) 776-7994

**E-mail:** info@sohs.org

**Website:** sohs.org

**History Center**

106 N. Central, Medford
Mon. - Fri., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Research Library**

106 N. Central, Medford
Tues. - Fri., 1 to 5 p.m.

**Jacksonville Museum & Children’s Museum**

5th and C. Jacksonville
Wed. - Sat., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

**Hanley Farm**

1053 Hanley Road
Fri., Sat., Sun., 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**C.C. Beekman House**
California & Laurelwood, Jacksonville
Wed. - Sun., 1 to 5 p.m.

**C.C. Beekman Bank**
3rd and California, Jacksonville

**Jacksonville History Store**
3rd and California, Jacksonville
Wed. - Sat., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

**Third Street Artisans’ Studio**
3rd and California, Jacksonville
Sat., 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**U.S. Hotel**
3rd and California, Jacksonville
Upstairs room available for rent.

**Catholic Rectory**
4th and C. streets, Jacksonville

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**MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES**

<table>
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<th>Category</th>
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<td>Business</td>
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<td>Family</td>
<td>Two year $55 One year $30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Two year $35 One year $20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*We invite YOU to become a member!* Your membership will support: preservation of Southern Oregon’s rich heritage; Society exhibits and educational events; outreach to schools; workshops for adults and children; living history programs; and tours and demonstrations at historic Hanley Farm.

*Members receive Southern Oregon Heritage Today,* the Society’s monthly magazine with newsletter, providing a view into the past and keeping you up-to-date on services provided by the Society.

For membership information, call Susan Smith at 773-6536.

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*Historic Open House Listings:*

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - shpo.state.or.us
  - click on “publication”
  - PHONE: 503-378-4168
- Southern Oregon Historical Society
  - PHONE: 541-773-6536
Terror on the Wind:
Southern Oregon's Tragic Connection to the Fu-Go project of World War II
by Laura J. Gifford

World War II
stimulated vast technological developments in the arsenals of both the
Allied forces and the Axis powers. The Germans introduced military
rocket technology with the V-1 and V-2 bombs they showered upon
Britain. The United States demonstrated the awesome destructive power
of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan, too, experimented
with a variety of new technologies. One of these developments would prove
deadly to six people from the small Southern Oregon town of Bly.

This development, called the Fu-Go Project, was one of the more
innovative programs the Japanese military developed during World War II.
Japanese meteorologists knew more about the jet stream, a river of air
currents high in the atmosphere, than scientists elsewhere in the world.¹ Late
in the war, as the tide of battle shifted against Japan, the Japanese
government decided to use this knowledge to its advantage. Japanese
military engineers developed unmanned, non-motorized, hydrogen air
balloons, designed to carry up to five high-explosive and incendiary bombs.²
The Fu-Go balloons (one translation of Fu-Go is “windship weapon”) were constructed out of washi, a traditional Japanese paper glued together with potato paste and mass-produced by Japanese schoolgirls working in abysmal conditions. Six thousand of these balloons were set aloft in the upper atmosphere from launching sites east of the island of Honshu, floating across the Pacific in approximately sixty hours. The balloons were intended to serve several purposes, including diverting soldiers and resources, destroying U.S. and Canadian timber stands, and damaging American morale. The Japanese government reasoned that these silent, invisible tools of destruction would unnerve and demoralize the American populace—while burning down the precious timberlands of the American West. The first balloons were launched November 3, 1944, and within two days a U.S. Navy patrol boat spotted one floating on the water sixty-six miles southwest of San Pedro, California.

In the end this program proved ineffective. Although balloons were sighted as far inland as Michigan, only 285 total sightings were recorded—and, in fact, these sightings themselves signaled a failure. The intent of the Japanese engineers who built the bombs was that they would never be detected or seen; they were designed to self-destruct upon dropping their payloads, instilling an additional sense of fear and uncertainty in American mainland citizens faced with an invisible assailant. Of the bombs that did reach the mainland, all failed to generate major fires. Japan erred in beginning the attacks during the winter months. While the jet stream was most active during the winter, most western forestlands were covered in snow or soggy with rain.

In addition, Japan relied exclusively on Western news reports and intelligence interceptions to verify that the balloons had accomplished their goal. After the first balloons were sighted, however, the U.S. government, with the cooperation of the news media, adopted a policy of strict silence. From January 4, 1945, until May 22 of the same year, no mention of the bombs’ existence made it into American media sources, although officials did deliver scattered word-of-mouth warnings to schools and churches throughout the West, telling people to leave strange objects found anywhere alone. Largely because of this news blackout, the Japanese government halted the program in April 1945, convinced that few, if any, balloons made it to the mainland. American bombing runs had destroyed the majority of Japan’s hydrogen supply by this time, and there was no point in continuing a failing project that relied so heavily on this scarce resource.

The balloon bomb attacks did divert some American troops. The military took an active role in combating the threat of these balloons. Army Air Force and Navy fighters flew intercept missions to shoot down balloons when sighted, and Army Air Force and Army personnel were stationed at critical points along the West Coast to fight fires, should any have occurred. Also, the government transferred supplies of decontamination chemicals and sprays to counter the possibility of germ warfare via balloons, and state health officers, veterinarians, agricultural agents, and 4-H clubs were mobilized in the event of a biological attack. But the attacks failed to draw forces away from battles in the Pacific, and the very fact that U.S. military planes sighted and shot down balloons further indicates just how thoroughly the idea of an invisible attack failed.

Despite the ultimate failure of the Fu-Go Project, however, this program did kill six civilians—the only war-related deaths reported on the mainland during World War II that were enemy-inflicted. On May 5, 1945, Pastor Archie Mitchell took his pregnant wife and five Sunday school children to nearby Gearhart Mountain to go fishing. Mitchell, and his wife, Elyse, had moved to Bly recently to accept a call as pastor of the Christian Missionary Alliance Church. While Mitchell parked the car and retrieved the group’s picnic lunch, the children and Elyse explored the area. Finding something interesting in the bushes, the group shouted over to Mitchell. Mitchell sensed danger and ran toward them, telling them to get away from whatever it was that they had found. At that moment, however, their object of interest exploded, killing his wife and the five children: Jay Gifford, 13; Edward Engen, 13; siblings Dick and Joan Patzke, 14 and 13; and Sherman Shoemaker, 11. They had happened upon a balloon bomb that failed to drop.
There was a loud explosion. Twigs flew through the air. Pine needles began to fall. Dead branches and dust and dead logs went up.

Opposite, the Gearhart Mountain deaths were Page I news in the Klamath Falls Herald and News of May 7, 1945. The accident happened on a Saturday, and was first reported in Monday's Herald and News, but the cause of the tragedy was listed as "unannounced" in keeping with the government's policy of secrecy surrounding the Japanese balloon-bomb program.

While the families received full disclosure, public statements about the deaths remained subject to news blackouts imposed by the U.S. censornship office. This silence extended even to official records; in his May 7 coroner's report, Lake County Coroner James Ousley wrote, "The cause of death, in my opinion, was from an explosion from an undetermined source." Participants in a May 6 conference held at the forest supervisor's office in Lakeview determined that Forest Service officials would say the cause of the deaths was an explosion of undetermined nature, and would maintain that they were not at liberty to disclose any further information.

At the time of the incident, nothing was mentioned in either of Portland's major newspapers. Publications closer to the actual site of the explosion, however, were not able to ignore it; when seven people go on a fishing trip and only one returns, the residents of a sparsely-populated area will certainly notice. As the only daily newspaper in the region, the Herald and News was the first to mention the incident. While the dominant feature of the paper's front page on May 7 was, understandably, "Germans Surrender: Nazis Give Up Unconditionally," the second-largest headline on the page read "Blast Kills Six." "Five children and a minister's wife, all residents of Bly, were killed instantly by an explosion of unannounced cause while on a fishing trip in the Gearhart Mountain area," the paper reported.

The article goes so far as to state that "One of the members of the party found an object, others went to investigate, and the blast followed," but in keeping with the news blackout, the identity of the object was not revealed. On May 10, the Lake County Examiner also went no farther than to cite "an explosion of unannounced cause."

However, the balloon bomb explosion in Bly caused the federal government to seriously question its nondisclosure policy. Finally, it determined that more information was necessary to ensure the public safety in the future. The Navy and War departments issued a joint statement May 22, acknowledging the bombs' presence and providing the public with information on how to identify and avoid them. Newspaper coverage of the Bly

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tragedy, however, remained elusive. In the May 22 edition of the Oregon Journal, the civilian casualties were not mentioned, and in fact, the paper's coverage was dismissive of the balloons' threat. Journal editors gave the military substantial credit for acting proactively when, in reality, the statement was a reactive one:

The armed services said they took the position that the possibility of saving even one American life through precautionary measures would more than offset any military gain which the enemy might make from the mere knowledge that some of the balloons had arrived on this side of the Pacific.

The Journal did report that editors and broadcasters had been urged to continue working with the censorship office when covering stories related to balloon bombs. It seems safe to speculate that the Bly deaths were a detail the papers had been instructed to continue to omit. The article concluded, "in case the balloons cause a casualty, the statement said it will serve the national interest if the press and radio and all civilians refrain from connecting such casualty with enemy action."

The Oregonian's coverage of the joint statement, in its May 23 edition, was similar. The paper included an excerpt from the statement reading, "it is desirable that people, and especially children, living west of the Mississippi River, be warned of this possible hazard and cautioned under no circumstances to touch or approach any unfamiliar object." No doubt the memory of the Bly incident was prominent in officials' thinking when this particular portion of the statement was drafted. The Oregonian
This rock monument at the Mitchell Recreation Area on Bureau of Land Management land on the south edge of Gearhart Mountain memorializes the young minister's wife and the five children who died here on May 5, 1945, when a Japanese wartime balloon bomb exploded.

Lakeview's Leading Newspaper Site

Vol. 4, No. 8

Lakeview's Leading Newspaper Site

Lakeview’s Leading Newspaper Site
article went on to report, “the departmental announcement made no
mention of casualties caused by the
bombs.” On May 24, the Oregonian
editorialized on the balloon bombings,
using the issue as an excuse to ridicule
the Japanese and labeling the Fu-Go
Project as even more ridiculous and
futile than the Germans’ liberal use of
V-1 and V-2 rockets in the closing
days of the European war:

The more they [the Japanese] attempt to embarrass America by
such means, the less they will have with which to resist the fate
which is being prepared for them only a few miles distant. They are
shooting away their resources over the heads of our forces in a
manner that makes the German stupidity almost smart.41

Evidently, disclosure of the balloon bombs’ presence failed to assure
the guilt of some government officials over the fate of the Bly six. On May 31, the
Western Defense Command issued a
statement containing the following
information:

You are being informed about
these balloons because they are
dangerous. Six persons have been
killed. You are now in on the
secret. ... Do not be unduly
alarmed. Let us all shoulder this
very minor load in a way such
that our fighting soldiers at the
front will be proud of us.42

June 1, the Lake County Examiner
was finally free to report on the details of the tragedy The War Department,
it reported, “told what has been known
to Lake county [sic] for some
time”—namely, that the blast was
caused by a balloon bomb.43 The
Examiner also reported that Mitchell
was the only one of the party who had
heard about balloon bombs at the time
of the explosion.44 Ostensibly, he had
come into contact with someone
willing to share information with him
as a community leader, but had not
had the opportunity or felt at liberty
to discuss the bombs’ presence with
others.

By 1948, the U.S. government
realized that while its policy of silence
contributed to the end of the balloon
bomb campaign, it also played at
least a partial role in the six deaths.
The House Judiciary Committee ruled
that military authorities were negligent in
failing to warn the public about the
attacks, and Congress awarded a total
of $20,000 to survivors of the victims.

However, later statements by Japanese
military officials confirm the
U.S. government’s initial suspicion that
silence was the best policy for ending
the Fu-Go Project, despite the Bly
tragedy. In 1976, Sakyo Adachi, who
designed radio equipment proving the
viability of the balloon bombs, stated
that if the Japanese government had
known that even one life had been
lost, another 10,000 balloons would
have been launched.

In recent years, the victims of the
balloon bomb have been memorialized
in a number of ways. A monument to
the six people killed stands at the site
where the bomb exploded, and in
1996, a group of Japanese women who
helped make the paper for the balloon
bombs visited the site to offer their
condolences. Remarkably, the women
did not learn what the paper they had
produced was used for until forty years
after the war had ended. The
surrounding wilderness is now a Forest
Service park called the Mitchell
Recreation Area. As mentioned
previously, memorial observances were
held on the fiftieth anniversary of the
event and received extensive coverage
in local newspapers. Now that the
residents of Bly have the freedom to
discuss this tragedy, they are
determined to preserve the memory of
the first—and last—mainland civilian
casualties of World War II. 8

Laura J. Gifford is a student in the Ph.D.
program at the University of California, Los
Angeles. Her grandparents, Ed and Joyce Ritchie
of Klamath Falls, are longtime Southern Oregon
residents.

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Collecting Antique Buttons

by Mary Ames Sheret

ANTIQUE BUTTONS APPEAL to collectors interested in art and history. Like fine jewelry, buttons are works of beauty fashioned on the smallest palette with paint, enamel, metal, glass, porcelain, fabric, shell or plastic. Button designs, uses, and manufacture provide insights into how people once dressed and worked. And some buttons commemorate historical events while others are collected to study military history.

Members of the Southern Oregon Button Club (SOBC) have been cataloging the Society’s large button collection for months. In order to organize and display the collection, the buttons are mounted on card stock. The members help each other with identifications and refer to the “Big Book of Buttons,” written by Elizabeth Hughes and Marion Lester for details.

Shown are metal picture buttons that became fashionable in the late 1800s. It is one of the most popular button collecting categories. Brass, tin, or steel buttons were stamped with a multitude of designs including people, animals, birds, flowers, buildings, sports and pastimes, and familiar scenes from plays, fables, and nursery rhymes. The hot air balloon button is especially fine. The steel cup has a pearl background and the balloon is embellished with cut steels.

The Southern Oregon Button Club members have some tips for new button collectors: leave the shanks attached; sort by date, material, category, or color; learn how to properly clean and store each type of button. For more information, log on to http://www.buttonimages.com or contact the Southern Oregon Button Club. It meets at noon on the first Thursday of each month at the Lions Sight and Hearing Center, 228 N. Holly Street, Medford.

Mary Ames Sheret is curator of collections and exhibits at the Southern Oregon Historical Society.
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Leave a Legacy
Southern Oregon Historical Society is participating in Leave a Legacy.
Mary Hanley bequeathed Hanley Farm to the Society in
1982, thereby leaving a historic legacy for Southern Oregon residents and visitors who can now experience the farm's rich history.
A VISIT TO ONION MOUNTAIN LOOKOUT

in the Siskiyou National Forest is an opportunity to get a panoramic view of much of Southern Oregon. The drive through the tall pine, fir, and madrone trees is spectacular in itself. It can be a day trip, or you can spend a few nights.

Around 1910, the first fire lookouts were constructed in the Pacific Northwest. These lookouts were tall trees with a few limbs removed and a four-foot by four-foot covered wooden platform scabbed together in the treetop. Peavine Mountain Lookout was more than 100 feet above ground and access was by a ladder nailed to the tree. The firewatcher was also expected to climb down and put out any fires in his area.

The first lookout on Onion Mountain, built in 1915, was a twelve-foot by twelve-foot cabin perched atop a twenty-foot platform tower. It was replaced in 1924 with another building the same size, on a six-foot-high log platform. It had a glassed-in second-story observation cupola in the center. The present structure was built in 1952 from a pre-fabricated kit.

Former lookout Wayne Cox of Central Point described the kit as rudimentary. "It was really just a pile of lumber," he recalled. But that pile of lumber turned into a "new" lookout on a ten-foot platform just west of the old one, which Cox had manned the year before. It took all summer to build. When Cox returned the next summer it was part of his job to paint the interior of the new building, as well as scan the surrounding forest day and night for any sign of fire.

The lookout contained a platform bed, table, chair, cabinet, and pedestal on which an Osbourne Firefinder was mounted. The firefinder was accurate in pinning down a fire's direction and distance. A dispatcher then checked with other lookouts by radio and, using triangulation, pinpointed the exact location of the fire so that a crew could be sent in. The firewatcher did not have to respond, or climb down a 100-foot ladder!

Sandy Foster of Grants Pass was a firewatcher from 1985 to 1993, the last year the Onion Mountain Lookout was manned. Since 1993, remote weather stations in the area have been used to detect lightning strikes. A computer maps these strikes to help pinpoint any fire. If a fire is close to the station, it will be manned.

Foster and Cox both said that star-gazing from atop the 4,438-foot peak is awesome. Bring your telescope, or at least binoculars, to take in the sparkling beauty of the night sky far away from the city lights. You may even find yourself enjoying the quiet, away from the hustle and bustle of a busy life, and discovering the real meaning of the word ... "relax"!

Loren Pryor is a lifelong resident of the Rogue Valley and a Central Point freelance writer.

To reach Onion Mountain Lookout from Grants Pass, travel west on Redwood Highway 199, approximately 6.5 miles to River Banks Road and turn right. Proceed 5.5 miles to Shan Creek Road (a single-lane gravel road with turnouts); turn left. Drive eight miles to the top. At the intersection of Forest Road 2509, turn right and proceed to a three-fork intersection. Take the middle fork to a locked yellow gate. Day-trippers will have an easy hike the last 0.8 mile from the gate.

Overnight guests will be given a key when renting the lookout, so don't worry about carrying all your gear, food, and water up the hill. You will be able to drive right up to the lookout. Additional information is available by calling the Siskiyou National Forest at (541) 471-6500, 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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6. Author interview with Sandy Foster, Grants Pass, 6 April 2002.
7. Cosby interview.