

**ROGUE VALLEY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY**

**3405 S. Pacific Hwy.  
Medford, OR 97501**

The *Rogue Digger* is a publication of the Rogue Valley Genealogical Society ([www.rvgsociety.org](http://www.rvgsociety.org)), a non-profit organization located in Medford, Oregon, which operates the Jackson County Genealogy Library ([www.rvgslibrary.org](http://www.rvgslibrary.org)). To submit an article, contact our editor [caradavisjacobson@gmail.com](mailto:caradavisjacobson@gmail.com) and copy [president@rvgslibrary.org](mailto:president@rvgslibrary.org). Cover images and design © RVGS, 2008.

## *Help Keep The Rogue Digger Publishing!*

Do you have an interesting story about researching your ancestors? Unexpected DNA results that changed your research goals? The story of an object (e.g., a quilt, a ring, an old pot) that led you on a search or shed light on your family or local history? Have you found a technique or resource that has helped you in your research or that might help others? Have you discovered something interesting in local history or genealogy that you would be willing to write about and share with our membership?

If so, our semi-annual publication, *The Rogue Digger*, needs you! *The Rogue Digger* is a genealogical periodical that reports information helpful to researchers as well as the results of genealogical investigations, especially as related to the Rogue Valley or to our membership. Submissions can be a mere page long or up to 10 pages long, with or without photos or illustrations. If you have an idea but don't quite know how to pull it together, our editor can advise and help; contact her at [caradavisjacobson@gmail.com](mailto:caradavisjacobson@gmail.com).

## ALMA'S LETTER

By Sue Waldron

Alma Gault graduated from Medford High School in June 1906, just days after her nineteenth birthday. Her parents, Milton and Rosetta Gault, had come to Oregon from Missouri in 1891, living first in Corvallis and Jacksonville before settling in Medford in 1900. After finishing school, like most of her friends Alma expected to marry within the next couple of years and start a family of her own. But in the meantime, as the oldest of their eight children, her parents insisted that she go to work.

The fruit industry in the Bear Creek Valley was booming. Alma wasn't interested in getting out in the orchards to pick pears—too much sun and climbing up and down a ladder—so summer was almost gone when she finally got a job at the C. H. Lewis packing house near Phoenix. Working in the former Weeks & Orr Orchards plant was considered quite a “coup,” as Lewis' packing house was new and noted for being well lighted and constructed for handling and cooling the fruit as rapidly as possible. After all, if you were going to *have* to work, it wouldn't hurt if the buildings were new and clean.

Alma had expected to move pears from a big box into a smaller box and was a bit surprised to find that she was expected to spend several hours in training. Some of the first points made during the training session were as follows:



*Scene in the C. H. Lewis packing house of packers putting up a carload of fancy comice pears. Photo source: Department of Horticulture, Oregon Agricultural College Experiment Station, Bulletin No. 101, Corvallis, Oregon, issued in October of 1908*

*“The pear is a very perishable fruit and requires the most careful handling. It must be picked while yet in a green state. Although the picking season varies with the prevailing climatic conditions every year, August 15 is about the time for the harvest to begin. After picking, the pears should be packed and shipped as soon as possible, as they are quite perishable. . . . The greatest profit is realized by handling a number one product in a first-class manner.”<sup>1</sup>*

The training went on to explain about the various types of pears that would be packed during the season: Bartlett in August, Bosc in September and Beurre Clairgeau in October. It was made clear that the “pack” might take different forms, but was always diagonal. The first row of pears in the box was always placed with the stem away from the packer. Then, based on their size and shape, the pears were layered in a “three-two, four-three or a three-three offset” formation; there were usually four tiers in a full-sized box. Each box must be packed with lining, a layer of wrapped pears, another lining, etc.

Lewis preferred to have his pear packing done by women and girls because he thought that they had a lighter touch with the delicate fruit. The packers were paid two cents a box and most could pack from 60 to 80 boxes a day. As a packer gained experience they could move from packing the regular-grade pears to packing the fancy-grade pears. Because the regular grade boxes usually contained more pears, it took longer to fill a box. A good packer could fill more fancy-grade boxes in a day, thereby earning more money.

Though the work could become somewhat tedious, and standing all day was tiring, all-in-all Alma enjoyed the time she spent in the packing house. She became good friends with a number of the other women and they talked of everything under the sun—from the latest recipes to local happenings to the sickness of a child. The ladies often speculated about where the boxes of fruit they packed would end up: Chicago, New York, Los Angeles. Early in October, when they began packing the Beurre Clairgeau, they were cautioned to use extra care in wrapping and packing. Lewis was going to try a new method of shipping. These boxes of pears were going all the way to England! Shipping fresh fruit to Europe, when it could be over a month in transit, was a challenge. Lewis had shipped fruit to England the year before but lost the whole shipment. This year the 860 half-boxes were to be iced along their whole route.

Alma was very intrigued with the idea that some of the fruit she packed would end up in England. One evening she wrote a short letter to the consumer of the fruit, whoever he or she might be, and slipped it in one of the boxes.

Lewis’ shipping experiment was a success, and the pears reached England in good shape. Alma’s letter also reached England. The November 23, 1906 edition of the *Medford Mail* newspaper reported that Alma had received the following response to her letter:

*44 Russell Street, Southsea, Portsmouth, Hants, England*

*October 17, 1906*

*Dear Miss Gault:*

*I opened a box of pears today (Wednesday) and inside I found your message. I was the individual that unpacked the pears and was very interested, so take the liberty of writing to you. I should think it a very pretty country where all those pears grow. They are so splendid that I have seen them sold at one shilling each. That is twenty-four cents in your money, and the people in London will think nothing of that price for a pear. I suppose they are much cheaper out there. I have never been to America. I have been to Cherbourg and Boulogne in France and in Scotland and in a good many large cities in my own country. I think your people know how to pack fruit. You must write and let me know what sort of place the states are. It must be a few months ago when you wrote that note, as I have had the pears in my shop for a month to ripen.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Mr. Mark Cousick*

It is not reported whether Alma ever responded.

Alma probably packed pears again in the fall of 1907. On September 18, 1908, she married Theodore Hawthorn Webb of Kansas. He was a house plasterer who found plenty of work in Medford because the community was going through a huge housing boom. On March 10, 1910, Alma gave birth to her son, James Milton. On December 29, 1913, she and Theo celebrated the birth of their second boy, Albert Theodore. Tragically, Albert did not reach his fourth birthday, dying on October 17, 1917. He was buried in Eastwood Cemetery in Medford.

Alma's marriage did not survive the death of their son. She and Theo divorced and Theo moved to Los Angeles, California, where he eventually remarried. Alma and James moved down to Sacramento, where she found a job as a waitress<sup>2</sup> in a small restaurant.

In 1932, Alma married John Royce, a carpenter. They spent several years in California but were living in Lakeview, Oregon, when John caught pneumonia February 1, 1938, and died thirteen days later<sup>3</sup>—on Valentine's Day. Alma then moved to Santa Rosa, California, where she lived near her sister. Alma died on April 4, 1943.<sup>4</sup> Her body was brought back to Medford to be buried next to her young son in the Eastwood Cemetery.



## FOOTNOTES

Article information not otherwise footnoted comes from the November 23, 1906 issue of the *Medford Mail* newspaper.

1. C. I. Lewis, S. L. Bennett and C. C. Vincent, *Bulletin No. 101: October 1908*. Oregon Agricultural College Experiment Station, Department of Horticulture. Corvallis, Oregon.
2. 1920 U. S. Census, 3 January 1920, Sacramento, Sacramento County, California
3. Oregon Death Index, Oregon Certificate No. 4-1938, Lakeview, Lake County, Oregon
4. California Death Index, Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, California



## INSPIRATION

By Diane Tibbitts



Soon after I retired (the first time) I signed up for a memoir writing class taught by Joan Hill at Rogue Valley Genealogical Society's Jackson County Genealogy Library. It turned out Joan was a master at memoir writing, and she was truly a mentor—encouraging and supportive. I was one of the many who attended faithfully, each week bringing an assignment back to class. That opportunity re-awakened my love for writing, and after the class ended, several of us decided to continue to meet on what has turned out to be a more-or-less monthly basis. Joan, Marilyn, Jane, and I were the ones who stuck with it, developing our writing skills and acquiring the kind of closeness that comes from sharing our history and some of the deeper feelings that go along with it.

There are now over 200 pages of writings about my life and about the family experiences that helped shape me into the person I am today. I've grown a new perspective from looking through the lens of time, traveling decades and then centuries, back into my family origins. More than 7,000 members were added to my family tree, complete with collected stories and facts about those whose lives were marked by notoriety, wealth, royalty, and chicanery. I've written about the ones who were beheaded, imprisoned, shipwrecked, migrated to the New World, and pioneered in the West. I've termed it "time-traveling," and it has become one of my favorite pastimes. There is now a collection of more than 150 castles that were at one time the residences of some of my long-ago relatives, and I'm discovering more as I research my husband's family tree.

We talked about DNA testing, the latest frontier in genealogical research. My brother did his DNA, my husband did his, and then I did mine. The recombining of the genetic code left my brother and me with very different DNA—somewhat surprising, but consistent with my findings in the family tree. It has been fun exploring this new tool in biological awareness, and there are new-found third and fourth cousins who could prove to be interesting.

I was inspired to find and reconnect with my long-lost Aunt Gale through writing memoirs about my father's family and then was able to take a trip, along with my brother Dave, to meet her and my two cousins. It was a sweet reunion, and we continue to stay in touch.

There is something deep about the connection shared between writers. A piece of your soul goes on display for them, and they look at your work with a reader's eye, making suggestions and giving support to keep at it. This process has grown with us, more each and every time we meet—inspiration, encouragement, experimentation, all nurturing the writer within each of us.

As I think about moving to a new place, I wonder how to replace this experience and I know I can't. It is normal to desire to replace the loss, and so I search for at least a reasonable place to start. The Beloit Public Library offers a writing group for adults that meets once a month, which I'll try out, and a book discussion group (another replacement), and a genealogy group that meets once a month—all my favorites in one place. It's a new beginning.

But this experience over the past six years won't be replaceable. There is no replacing people like Joan, Marilyn, and Jane. They have been treasures in my life and I hope that our writing will keep us in touch with each other for many more years to come, even though it may be at a distance. We have shared our hearts, our history, and more.

Farewell, sweet wordsmiths! Journey on!



## THE ASHLAND RAILROAD CENTENNIAL QUILT

By Sue Waldron

Seventeen years ago, I designed the Ashland Railroad Centennial Quilt. Recently the Jacksonville Museum Quilters, who owned this quilt, donated it, along with ten others, to the Rogue Valley Genealogical Society for display in their library. I would like to share with you how this quilt came to be and how I consider it relevant to genealogy.

In September 1984, I decided to finish my college degree. I became a student at Southern Oregon College, now Southern Oregon University, for the next two years. I chose History as my major. In my second year at SOC, I discovered Practicum Classes. These classes allowed me to choose a project in my major (outside of structured classes), work independently, and earn credits toward graduation. What an eye opener!

At that time, the Southern Oregon Historical Society had a branch museum on the ground floor of the Chappell-Swedenburg House on SOC's campus. There were two very energetic museum managers at that time, Nan Hannon and Leslie Egger-Gould. They agreed to work with me.

My first Practicum Class involved organizing the Swedenburg research library and working with the volunteers. The second allowed me to suggest, research, and help mount a display of early hairdressing tools.

My third Practicum class was a quilt.

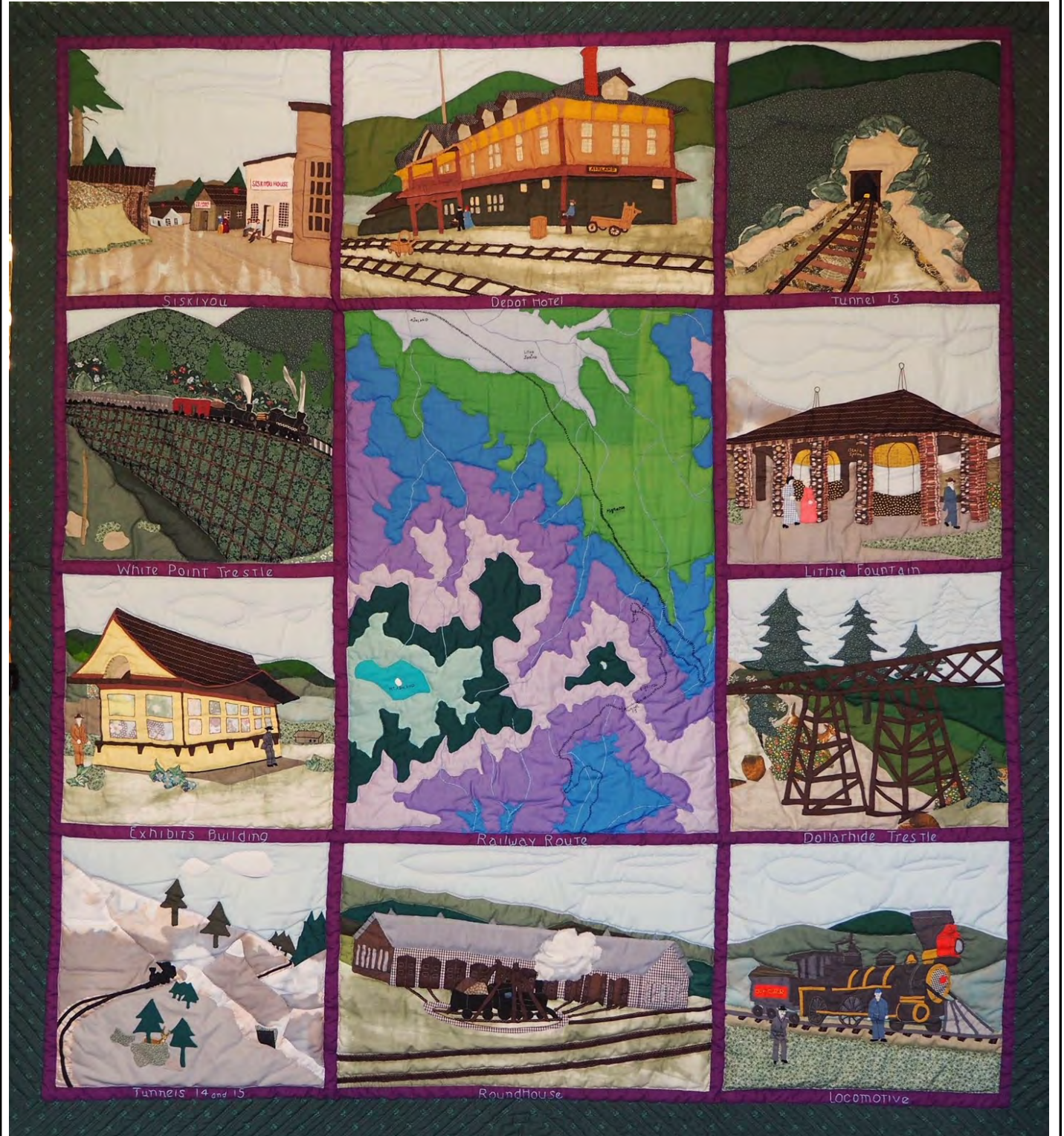
There was a lot of talking going on in Ashland in the spring of 1986. People were looking for ways to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the completion of construction of railroad tracks over the Siskiyou Mountains. I had been a quilt maker since the early 1970s, so I decided to combine history and quilt-making. The quilt turned out to be rather ambitious, more than my skill level could handle. I approached Dora Scheidecker of the Jacksonville Museum Quilters with my idea. She said the Quilters would construct this quilt.

The quilt measures 94 inches wide x 107 inches long. It is constructed of cotton fabrics and was pieced and quilted by members of the Jacksonville Museum Quilters. There are eleven blocks of applique.

Let's start with the center block. One of the "facts" I found quite fascinating about the construction of the Oregon and California Railroad over the Siskiyou Mountains, was the route the tracks took south to the California state line—all of the loops, trestles and tunnels. I wondered how many people today know that route.

I borrowed a topographical map from the Geography Department and traced the portion of the map showing the land forms between Ashland and the California state line. I drew the map using 800 foot intervals of elevation. Then, to illustrate to the quilters how I envisioned the block, I found various colored sheets of tissue paper and created a pattern. That pattern was destroyed during the quilt making process.

The other ten blocks were chosen during a search of photographs in the Southern Oregon Historical Society's libraries in Jacksonville and Ashland. The procedure to transform these photos into quilt blocks involved turning them first into line drawings, unfortunately eliminating some details in the process. The drawings were then enlarged to quilt block size, which was determined based on the dimensions of a queen-sized bed. All of this work was turned over to the Jacksonville Museum Quilters, who made the quilt.



Starting in the upper left hand corner of the quilt, here are some of the statistics for the structures built to complete the Oregon and California Railroad over the Siskiyou Mountains:

The town of Siskiyou was built between 1884 and 1885 just above today's intersection of Interstate 5 and the Mt. Ashland Ski Road. At one time the town included two hotels, an eating house, telegraph station and two turntables.

The Depot Hotel was built in 1888. It had 60 lodging rooms and could seat 200 in the dining room. In 1900, lunch cost 50 cents and chicken fricassee was the only meal available. Southern Pacific ran the hotel until 1927. The building was dismantled in 1937.

Tunnel 13 was built between 1886 and 1887. It is located south of the town of Siskiyou and is 3,100 feet long. It was the site of the notorious DeAutremont train robbery in 1923.

Lithia Fountain was apparently built in 1905 as part of the Ashland Board of Trade's efforts to impress the many travelers passing through on their way to the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland. The stone work was done by Pennington and Sons, skilled stonecutters and monumental architects of Ashland.

The Dollarhide Trestle was built between 1885 and 1886. It is located south of the Steinman wood lot at the point where the track turns back north headed for Tunnels 14 and 15. (The lumber was provided by the Dollarhide family from logs cut on their property.) The trestle is between 500 and 600 feet long and about 200 feet high. Southern Pacific began filling the crossing in either 1902 or 1904, completing the work in 1927.

The Locomotive is called an "Atlantic." It has a wheel structure of 4-4-2 (which means that it has four wheels in the engine truck, four wheels in the drive truck and two wheels in the trailing truck). This passenger engine ran on steam, at first produced by wood and later by oil. This style of engine was in use from the 1880s until about 1920.

The Roundhouse was built in the summer of 1888. By the 1920s, there were 31 bays. Demolition began in 1953 with the removal of 16 bays. In 1986, one corner of the old building remained as part of a shop building. The turntable was filled in, not removed. The turntable required 80,000 bricks, making a total of nearly 500,000 bricks for the two structures, all shipped from Anderson, California.

Tunnels 14 and 15 were constructed between 1886 and 1887. Tunnel 14 is 1,992 feet long and has a 14 degree curve. Tunnel 15 is 268 feet long. The tunnels are located south of the Dollarhide Trestle and north of the town of Siskiyou. (The area above the tunnels was the living site for the Chinese crews constructing the tunnel.)

The Exhibit Building was built in 1905 by the Ashland Board of Trade. The building was designed by renowned local architect Frank C. Clark the first year he lived in southern Oregon. The building was originally to be 12 feet wide and 20 feet long with a three-foot roof projection all the way around. On May 29<sup>th</sup> the length was increased by 12 feet to accommodate additional displays. Since Ashland was a division headquarters, trains stopped for approximately half an hour while engines and crews were rotated. Ashland was considered an ideal location to showcase local produce and materials for the large crowds flocking to the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland.

The White Point Trestle was built between 1886 and 1887. It is 628 feet long and 60 feet high. It is located 1.3 miles west of the Siskiyou Station, and at one time supported two sets of tracks. In 1900, concrete walls were built up around the trestle and carloads of dirt were brought in to fill between the walls. Filling was not completed until 1929.



Now, fascinating as all this is, just how does this quilt have any connection to genealogy? Well, this is what I consider to be the genealogists' next step. After you have poked and prodded all the family members, census records, and any other data you can locate, you have a pretty clear picture, maybe even some photographs, of your ancestors. But what do you know about their lives? The neighborhood where they lived? What did they see every day when they went to work, or shopping, or to school? What color was the house they lived in? Who built it? When? Maybe that is all trivial information, and it is definitely not needed to gain membership in the DAR, but wouldn't it be interesting to know?

If your ancestor lived in the Ashland Railroad District, these quilt blocks represent some of the things they saw every day. Here you can see the "Colonial Yellow" and chocolate brown colors used on the Depot Hotel. (Top row, center.) You can admire the swooping lines of Frank Clark's design for the Exhibit Building. (Left side, third down.) Yes, if you dig around, you may find the photographs that show these same locales, but how many are in color?

As you do your family research, remember to look for some of the less-obvious resources like this quilt. They may not contain a specific date that you seek, but they may tell you who your ancestors' neighbors were, where the grocery store was located, or how your ancestor passed time each day.

A couple of resources you might want to consider to learn more about day-to-day life during this railroad era are the two articles described below, which can be found in the Southern Oregon Historical Society publication *Table Rock Sentinel*. (Yes, I wrote the stories, but they still have good data!)

"Growing Up in the Railroad District" was written in March 1988. The information came from oral histories recorded in interviews with women who grew up in the District. Many local museums, genealogical and historical societies collect oral histories. While you might not find an interview with your relative, maybe there is one with a neighbor?

Information for the "District Landladies" story, written in March 1989, was found in data compiled for the Ashland Landmarks Heritage List collected by Kay Atwood.

Locally there are many documents of this nature. Medford, Ashland, and Jacksonville all have historic neighborhood designations; Jackson County conducted a "Cultural and Historical Resource Survey" in 1992. There exist research and photographs to support all of those designations and documents. Maybe an image of your ancestor's home or surroundings can be found among them!

## **SOURCES**

Information about each of the buildings or structures that appear on the quilt came from stories in issues of the *Ashland Tidings* newspaper between the years of 1884-1907. The author also interviewed railroad workers in 1985.



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