

A LOOK BACK

James D. Buckley, Applegate pioneer

BY PAUL FATTIG

When James D. Buckley first beheld the Applegate Valley in 1854, the young man was thrilled at the sight of the lush river valley. After all, the native of Ireland knew what it was to feel the gnawing ache of hunger. “In his diary, he noted that his family had come to the United States because of the potato famine in the late 1840s,” said his great-granddaughter Mary Buckley Mikkelsen. “My guess is they had a hungry day or two in their time.”

James and his older brother, John Buckley, lived on the East Coast for two years before heading west on the Oregon Trail and settling in the picturesque southwest corner of what was then the Oregon Territory. They first camped and

mined on Jackass Creek, now known as Forest Creek, which became the dividing line between the two brothers’ properties.

“When they arrived, there were still some old Indian women and children living here who hadn’t been rounded up or exterminated,” Mary said. “James and John Buckley fed them and never participated in the vigilante activities against Native Americans. The brothers were pacifists; they never fought in wars. That was all in James’s diary.”

Sadly, James Buckley’s diary burned in a house fire in later years. Yet his stories still live on in his great-granddaughter, including tales about the 1880s-era Buckley farmhouse, which can still be

seen on the east side of Hamilton Road between Highway 238 and Cantrall Buckley Park.

“Grandpa Buckley started the tradition of keeping a bottle of moonshine just inside the water tower by the door,” she said. “The deal was, you could go in and have a drink, but don’t drink the last drop. Always leave a drink for the next guy. My dad kept a bottle there too.”

James and John Buckley had been educated at a Catholic school in Ireland. Mary said, “It wasn’t like the brothers were poor, uneducated dirt farmers. They could read and write quite well. John, the older brother, was a surveyor.”

The Buckley patriarchs came to know the movers and shakers of the day, including Lindsay Applegate, one of the two brothers who, in 1846, blazed what became known as the Applegate Trail between what is now Idaho and southwestern Oregon.

“My family never threw anything away,” Mary said as she pulled out a stack of receipts James Buckley received from the Nunan-Taylor Co. store in Jacksonville. Located in what is now the Kubli Building on California Street, it billed itself as “Dealers and jobbers in dry goods, boots, shoes, groceries, glass, wood and wire.” In essence, it was the Walmart of its day.

Consider the October 1, 1905, receipt in which James had a balance due of \$8.05. The list includes 50 cents for rice, 25 cents for a handkerchief, 25 cents for onion sets, 30 cents for garden seeds, 40 cents for three yards of duck (fabric), 50 cents for early rose potatoes, and 50 cents for a broom. According to Mary, the BUCKLEYS would also sell things like eggs to the store.

Her great-grandfather married Margaret Rielly, also a native of Ireland. “She was a cousin to the McAndrews, who settled in Medford,” Mary explained. “Her grandmother brought her around

the Horn when she was 19 years old and brought her dowry into the valley from Eureka. She stayed with the McAndrews for a while before marrying James Buckley.” That marriage would produce six children, including James F. Buckley, Mary’s paternal grandfather.

When James D. Buckley died in 1908, the *Irish World and American Industrial Liberator* newspaper in New York City ran his obituary. “The venerable James D. Buckley, one of Oregon’s pioneers, departed this life on October 30,” read the November 28, 1908, article. “He died in the midst of his sorrowing family at his home in Ruch, Oregon. Born in County Cork, Ireland, 72 years ago, he came to America as a lad of 15. More than a half century of earnest devotion he has given to his adopted land while ever keeping precious memory and aid when opportunity offered to the land of his birth.”

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JAMES D. BUCKLEY



The Buckley family at home. Left to right, back row: James Buckley, Margaret (Maggie) Buckley, and George Buckley. Front row: Mary Catherine (Kate) Buckley and Rose Buckley.

Voices of the Applegate New session in January



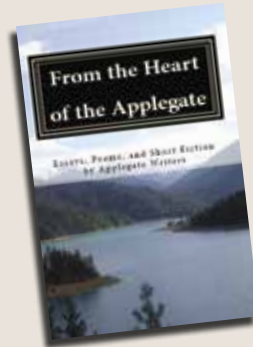
Voices of the Applegate had an exciting and joyful celebration of the fall season with two performances held before Thanksgiving—one concert at the Historic Presbyterian Church on 6th and California Streets and another at the Applegate River Lodge in Applegate. The concerts consisted of three- and four-part harmony melodies such as “Send Down the Rain,” “Homeward Bound,” and Neil Diamond’s “Stargazer.”

Shayne Flock became the director of Voices of the Applegate in the fall of 2018, and the choir continues to grow in size and skill. Regular practice in rehearsals improves our abilities as singers and as performers. Rehearsals are held every Tuesday evening from 7 to 8:30 pm at Ruch Library, 7919 Highway 238. We will begin a new session on January 7, 2020, that will end on March 31. Concerts will follow on April 3 and 5.

We are a community choir of about 25 participants from the Applegate Valley, Williams, and Jacksonville, all devoted to music and singing. We welcome new members—come and join us. No audition is needed.

There is nothing more joyful than raising our voices together.
Joan Peterson • 541-846-6988

From the Heart of the Applegate



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