

BOOK REVIEW

Jacksonville's Emerald Necklace

From Goldmines to Woodlands Trails

Larry B. Smith

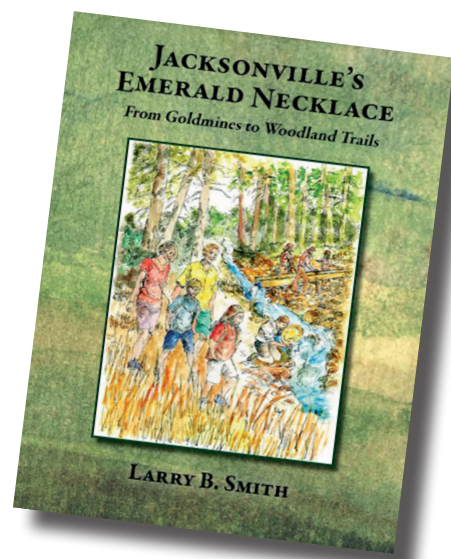
Jacksonville Woodlands Association 2022

BY JEANETTE LETOURNEUX

A gem of a story! At 408 pages and more than 400 photos, this multifaceted book should appeal to wide and diverse audiences.

Jacksonville's Emerald Necklace tells the stories behind the formation of the Jacksonville Woodlands Association (JWA) in 1989 and the amazing 20-year efforts of individuals, students, private organizations, government agencies, legislators, landowners, and the City of Jacksonville to purchase 21 parcels to create the Jacksonville Woodlands, almost 300 acres and 16 miles of trails bordering 70 percent of the town. The Oregon State Parks Department calls the Jacksonville Woodlands "the most unique and successful preservation project of its kind in the whole state." The details of the project will warm your heart and inspire you to explore this beautiful "emerald necklace."

Author Larry B. Smith weaves the pioneer history and stories of ownership of



the 21 parcels to the eventual acquisition by JWA and the ensuing trail building. Tales abound about the discovery of gold at Rich Gulch in 1852, which started one of the largest gold rushes in the West; about the Britt, Beekman, Zigler, and other pioneer families and landowners; about the transformation of Jacksonville from a virtual ghost town and a "rural slum" in the 1920s and 1930s (due in part to poverty preventing property owners from demolishing the downtown

buildings) to its designation as a National Historic Landmark; and about the many luminaries and eccentrics who have shaped Jacksonville's past and present.

The most endearing stories are about the impact on the kids. Larry, who taught fifth grade at Jacksonville Elementary School for 33 years and has led thousands of students trekking, researching, and working on the woodland trails, says he is most proud of this enduring legacy.

His students were a vital element of every aspect of the preservation project—building trails, raising money, giving presentations, and convincing many landowners to sell or donate their parcels through intense letter-writing campaigns and personal appeals. A yearlong correspondence in 1993, between the fifth-grade class and Zelia Zigler (granddaughter of early settler Sarah Zigler), led to Zelia donating a parcel of land running from Britt Gardens west along Jackson Creek. Zelia performed the ribbon-cutting on the resulting Sarah Zigler Trail, which was designated a National Recreation Trail in 2000.

There are many other incredible successes and fun stories. Eleven-year-old Brian Mulhollen (now fire marshal

of the Applegate Valley Fire District) negotiated the purchase of a ten-acre parcel from Medford. In 1993 Brian received the Jefferson Award, the highest community award in the United States. The "talking tree" campaign culminated in the designation of the Britt Sequoia as an Oregon Heritage Tree in 1998. Students received national awards from Sea World, the National Park Service, and Amway Corporation, among others. They took trips to Washington, DC, and Florida.

Many of the writings and pictures of fifth-grade students are juxtaposed with current remembrances and pictures of those students, now grown, hiking the trails with their own kids and families.

Permeating these stories are certain ideals—the love for community and the natural world, the bonds and inspiration that develop between teacher and students, and the faith in people, young and old, to do the right thing, to pull together, and to accomplish big, important goals. These principles, instilled in generations, are a true treasure that will hopefully endure as long as the shining green spaces that dedicated volunteers and others have so valiantly preserved.

Jeanette LeTourneux
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David Dobbs departs

It is with deep regret that the *Applegater* Board of Directors announces the resignation of our over-the-top dedicated treasurer, David Dobbs. We already miss his meticulous attention to our financial affairs and the many other things he did for the *Applegater*. We'll need two or three more board members to fill his shoes!

Good luck, Dave, in your future, and we look forward to seeing you at the next Gater function.

(More information will appear in the winter *Applegater*.)

~ IMPORTANT REMINDER ~

In order to assure that your donation is doubled, please be sure to date your check no earlier than November 1, 2023, and no later than December 31, 2023.

Thank you for your support!

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