

NONPROFIT NEWS AND UPDATES



Sara Marie Hamilton, Applegate Food and Farm Coordinator, at A Greater Applegate's Community Food Hub at LongSword Vineyard.

Come to the Jacksaphine Count(r)y Fair in September

BY MEGAN FEHRMAN

When my neighbor Christina Ammon told me about meeting Ernest Adam one afternoon at the Applegate River Lodge (as it was called then), something she said stuck with me. Ernest talked about the community of “Jacksaphine,” the fictitious world with no border between our two counties. According to Ernest, “Everyone who lives in Jackson and Josephine counties is in one county, Jacksaphine. Bottom line. And everyone gets along.”

Months later, when A Greater Applegate (AGA) was brainstorming for our first annual community celebration and fundraiser, the idea of Jacksaphine County returned to me. We could host an event, I thought, about the beauty, flavors, and diversity of the Applegate Valley, a unique rural place that is shared by both Jackson and Josephine counties.

And so the idea for the Jacksaphine Count(r)y Fair was born. We are excited to announce that this event will be held from 2-8 pm Saturday, September 16, near downtown Applegate. It will be a family-friendly event, with live music from multiple bands, games, kids’ activities, a dessert competition, local food and drink, a pop-up art gallery, raffles, and an auction highlighting the “Best of the Applegate”!

This fundraiser will sustain AGA’s community-building work, directly supporting our staff, programs, and operational costs. This event will also celebrate the one-year anniversary of the release of the Applegate Valley Vision, and we will showcase the progress being made through our active working groups and networks. To buy tickets, visit agreaterapplegate.org.

If you have any goods, services, workshops, or special talents that you would like to offer as part of our raffle and auction items, please contact AGA board member Kim Zwemer-Margulis at kimzm@kzmcounseling.com.

Here are a few other ways AGA is supporting connections and building community in Jacksaphine County:

We are proud to be supporting the Community Food Hub at the Applegate Evening Market, in partnership with the Rogue Valley Food System Network and Rogue Artisan Foods. This booth ensures that all in our community have reliable and consistent access to locally grown food. At LongSword Vineyard, from 4-7 pm every Wednesday in September, you can find produce, berries, and eggs at the Community Food Hub booth, plus a

wide array of other goods from a variety of farmers, artisans, and makers, including meat, plants, mushrooms, bread, clothes, metalwork, and more! Applegate Evening Market accepts Double Up Food Bucks and SNAP. Anyone receiving SNAP benefits can swipe their EBT card for up to a \$20 voucher and get matching funds to purchase fruits and vegetables.

AGA will be hosting a Nonprofit Fair at the Williams Farmers Market from 4-6:30 pm Monday, September 26, at Sugarloaf Community Association on Tetherow Road. Get to know some of the awesome nonprofits working in the valley, learn about volunteer opportunities, sign up for newsletters, join a board of directors, or make a donation.

If you run a local business or are an entrepreneur working in the Applegate, be on the lookout for the Business Network Resource and Technical Assistance Fair coming again on October 5 at Valley View Winery. This will be a one-stop shop to meet and talk with individuals and organizations that offer business assistance, plus a great place to network and meet other local businesspeople. Marcy and Rob Rustad, owners of Applegate River Lavender, say, “Being a part of the AGA community has brought real value to our farm business and introduced us to many new friends. We were new to the area three years ago and had a lot to learn. AGA provided us with the many stepping-stones needed to engage with the community, meet other business owners, and secure the technical assistance needed to take the farm to a new level.”

Finally, this is the last call for the 2023 Innovation Grant applications, which are due at 5 pm Friday, September 8. Innovation Grants are open to individuals, businesses, and community organizations. All proposed projects must align with one or more of the 90 strategies or 500 Ideas for Action from the Applegate Valley Vision. We look forward to seeing all the great ideas and projects that are being developed right here in the Applegate. Check out Applegate Valley Connect (applegateconnect.org) for reports on past Innovation Grants and progress being made toward our common vision as we work together to make this special place even better.

Megan Fehrman
Co-Executive Director
A Greater Applegate
megan@agreaterapplegate.org

A brief history of Applegate harvests

BY LAURA AHEARN

Autumn. Time to bring in the crops. How different is Applegate harvest time now from past times?

According to Takelma legend, Acorn Woman came down from M’laikini Yaina (Mount McLoughlin) and threw pieces of her flesh on oak trees, sprouting acorns. The Indigenous peoples who lived here for millenia dried and ground the acorns as a dietary staple.

White prospectors and settlers arrived in the 1850s. So did pickles! William Thompson (as in Thompson Creek) planted two and a half acres of potatoes and set up three ten-gallon barrels of pickles. He still had more pickling supplies—soaking pans, kegs of vinegar—when his cabin burned down in September 1853. Eighty years later, Edwin Taylor took Applegate pickle-making to an industrial scale, with 20 acres of cucumbers and 20 employees at his farm that straddled the Applegate River where Hamilton Road makes its sharp bend.

Some prospectors tired of mining and became agrarians, like those who married Native American women and headed to “Big Applegate” in the 1870s. Their community became known as Watkins, and “haying” was a routine chore. Seventy years later, renowned photographer Russell Lee captured Rolland “Sandy” Smith haying on the former Melvin Sturgess homestead adjoining Taylor’s farm.

Many prospectors continued mining, of course, and some, like Amos McKee, used their mineral wealth to buy farmland. What was McKee’s main market crop in the early 1900s? Red Mexican beans. Amos would take the beans from Palmer Creek to Jacksonville in a horse-drawn wagon; on the 18-mile trip his children, Ernest, Floyd, and Pearl, would jump on the beans to remove the husks.

Around this time a New York City mining magnate bought the Blue Ledge mining claims and hired lots of hungry people to blast tunnels and move the copper ore “to the dump.” (It was impractical to transport the raw ore to the smelter in Tacoma until copper prices shot up in World War I.) The Blue Ledge camp was on steep rocky land, far up rugged Joe Creek Canyon. No way to grow food there. Applegate farmers and even Jacksonville elite were happy to sell their bounty. The McKee Bridge Historical Society’s archives contain the company’s vouchers for 1906-16. George Culy at Steamboat sold apples, cattle, and hogs. John Offenbacher, potatoes. “Cap” Ruch, eggs and butter. Emil Britt, honey.

Another big growing craze in this era? Hops! Growers took a heavy hit when Prohibition was enacted but rebounded on sales to the European market. At harvest time the call would go out that so-and-so needed help to harvest 70 acres; the very next day over 100 people might show up to camp out and go to work.

The Applegate’s most glamorous crop? It’s gotta be the gladiolus flower. In the 1930s there were three big West



The McKees and friends take Mexican beans to Jacksonville in 1908. Photo: Evelyn Byrne Williams collection.



“Haying a mountain valley” by Russell Lee, July 1942 (Library of Congress).

Coast flower festivals: roses in Pasadena, roses in Portland, and glads in Grants Pass. “At the time, Grants Pass gladioli were world-famous big business, with a Gladiolus Society created to regulate where the bulbs could be grown... After 20 years the industry came to an end caused by low-cost imported gladiolus and the loss of farmland” (Southern Oregon Public Broadcasting Service, *Southern Oregon Experience*).

In the recent past a couple of odoriferous plant types seemed to proliferate in the Applegate, but their profitability has tanked, so let’s move on to two other crops with staying power that take years of dedicated cultivation, but reward with soothing smells and tantalizing tastes—wine grapes.

In 1972 the Wisnovsky family planted their vineyard at Valley View. Fifty-one years later we can celebrate new labels and bottlings by vintners like Wanderlust and RiverCrest Ranch.

The recent Southern Oregon Lavender Trail Festival drew many people to the Applegate. They were not only interested in this fascinating herb but in our community’s history as well. Thank you, Kingfisher Farm, for inviting McKee Bridge Historical Society to participate! We were able to inform dozens of visitors that Oregon’s oldest surviving covered bridge (tied, according to Oregon Department of Transportation, with Gallon House Bridge in Marion County) was just another mile down the road and so worth a visit.

If you would like to help out with the upcoming Christmas on a Covered Bridge or join McKee Bridge Historical Society to share our Applegate heritage, come to the Annual Meeting at McKee Bridge at 11 am September 30.

Laura Ahearn
mckeebridge1917@gmail.com