



The Historacle

The Official Newsletter of the
Talent Historical Society

Volume 23 Issue 1

March 2017

Home Town Theater - The Lithia Drive-In

By Belinda Klimek Vos

It's a hot summer night in the 1960's in the Rogue Valley. You and your friends, one of whom has a car, are looking for something to do. Well, you could go and "cruise the gut" in Medford; down Riverside, left at Jack's and then tool down Central to circle around again. Gas was cheap, 38 cents a gallon, so you could go a long way on a dollar.

Or you could head to a drive-in. One such establishment, the Lithia Drive-In could be found just south of Talent right off Highway 99 (now South Pacific Hwy.) where it intersects with Creel Rd. Located between Ashland and Medford, it was a popular place to see a movie and have some fun.

Drive in movie theaters appealed to a wide range of people. Families with children enjoyed the economical fees and many had playgrounds to entertain the kiddos before the movie began. And when the kids got tired, they could just

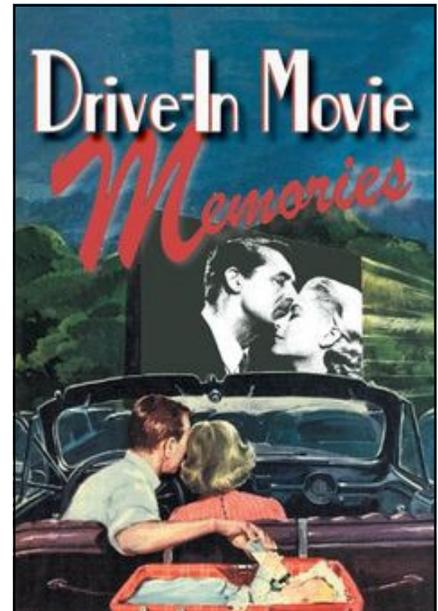
fall asleep in the back seat.

Adults enjoyed the experience as well. But teenagers - oh teenagers!! Drive-in movies were a match made in heaven. Where else could you cram 8-10 friends in a car, a few extra in the trunk on some occasions, and hang out with your buddies while taking in the latest flick. Grab some popcorn and a coke and you were all set.

Young couples enjoyed the unique opportunities afforded by drive-in movies as well. Yes, well, I won't go into any detail on that aspect, but they were very popular!

Drive-ins were loud, boisterous affairs with car doors slamming and lots of honking if the movie didn't start on time.

The first drive-in movie theaters began on the East coast of America, and it took awhile for them to migrate west. An article in the June 7, 1949 Medford



Mail Tribune describes two such theaters opening here in the Rogue Valley. *With two new "drive-In" theaters opening their gates to the Medford public this week, many of these same residents have been asking questions about the operation and techniques of drive-ins.*

This type of theater was first conceived in 1936, and was tried out in Union City, N.J. It had none of the refinements now available to patrons and was not a success.

Through the years following, improvements have been made until today a drive-in, with proper equipment, is considerably more convenient, in many ways, than the conventional theater.

Essentially, a drive-in is simply a big parking lot with a movie screen in front of it. But the lot is landscaped and tilted upward, permitting a clear view of the screen from both front and back

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Lithia Drive-In south of Talent, Oregon August 1981

Talent Historical Society

The Talent Historical Society researches and preserves the history of the Talent area in Southern Oregon. We offer a collection of historical archives to help local residents and visitors become better acquainted with our area's rich history.

We operate a museum and meeting place located at:

105 North Market Street
Talent, Oregon

The museum is open Saturday and Sunday and holiday Mondays from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

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The Historacle is published quarterly.

Editor/layout:
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President's Message

Since the last issue of the *Historacle*, two of our board members, Bradley Flint and Mark Smith-Poelz, have resigned. I would like to thank them both for the time they donated to THS and wish them well in their future endeavors.

I've got some exciting news to share with you all. At the February 15th City Council meeting, the Talent Food Bank and the City of Talent agreed to enter into a lease so the Food Bank can move their operations from the museum building to the Historic Town Hall. This frees up some valuable additional space for the Talent Historical Society in our museum building and provides much more space for the Food Bank to provide the critical service they offer our community.

Finally, we're looking for two or three new board members, a Merchandise Manager and a Volunteer Coordinator, so please call us if you have time to offer.

Ron Medinger - THS Board President

Talent Tomato Sale Coming Soon!!

It's that time of the year again. Time to start thinking about your garden and enjoying a juicy tomato fresh from the plant.

The Talent Historical Society will once again be offering Heirloom Talent Tomatoes for sale this year. The plants will be available at our Museum, 105 North Market St., Talent on Saturday, May 13th, the same day as Talent's City Wide Yard Sale. Hours will be from 8:00 am until 2:00 pm.

This unique tomato variety was originally grown by Talent farmer, Clarence Holdridge. Clarence had noted that a particular plant in his large tomato field was better than the rest of his Medford variety. He saved the seeds from this special plant, naming it the Talent Tomato and grew it the next year. Not long after, the local cannery closed, commercial growing ended, and a few seeds were left forgotten in a drawer until rediscovered 18 years later. Surprisingly, when planted, about 60% germinated and grew to adult plants.

Our plants are being grown by Greenleaf Industries in Grants Pass, which is a private, non-profit corporation, providing training and employment opportunities to men and women with varying developmental disabilities.

The red, medium size fruit is meaty and flavorful, and you will enjoy an early and long harvest with this indeter-

minate type of tomato. The strong, sturdy plants will be available in both 4" pots for \$3.00 or gallon containers for \$7.00.

We will also be offering our 2017 edition of the Talent Tomato t-shirt featuring a new logo created by board member Willow McCloud. The shirts will be available in various colors and sizes. As a special thank you to those who have purchased t-shirts in the past, we are offering a 10% discount on our new 2017 shirt to anyone wearing a 2015 or 2016 Talent Tomato t-shirt on the day of the sale.!

Tomato plants and t-shirts may be pre-ordered until Sunday May 7th at 5:00 pm by dropping by the Museum or you can also place an order by going to our website at: www.talenthistory.org and clicking on the store icon.

All advanced orders must be paid in full at the time of purchase, and must be picked up at the Museum on Saturday May 13th from 8:00 am until 5:00 pm or Sunday from 1:00 to 5:00 pm. Last year, we ran out of plants by 10:00 the morning of the sale, so if you want to be assured of a Talent Tomato, place your orders early. You can call 541-512-8838 for more information.

This event is one of our major fundraisers for the year, so we hope you will come out and support the Talent Historical Society while growing a tasty tomato at the same time.

Tuesday Evening at the Museum

The Talent Historical Society continues its series of presentations held on the fourth Tuesday of each month from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Our December 27th Holiday Open House was a big success with lots of goodies and good cheer. Jan Wright gave a moving presentation on the Beeson/Toon dollhouse which was on display.

Native American, Tom Smith, joined us on January 24th to give a presentation on tool making and other Native crafts. A standing room only crowd was very appreciative of his knowledge of Native American crafts.

On Tuesday, February 28th, Ron Meyer gave a talk on the History of the Talent Irrigation District which celebrated 100 years of service in 2016.

Original poetry about Southern Oregon history will be presented by THS board member, Bob Casebeer, on March 28th.

Come join the fun on April 25th as we get ready for the annual Talent Tomato sale by hosting an event entitled "Tomato Tales, Myths & Legends" presented by members of the THS Board and various community members. Come and share your own tomato tales - tall or otherwise.

On May 23rd, Sue Naumes will join us to discuss our area's historic fruit labels.

All talks are held at our museum at 105 North Market Street, Talent, unless otherwise noted.

Please come and join us as we explore the rich history of Talent, Oregon. The meetings are free and open to the public, and you need not be a member to attend.



Story Time

Interesting stories about Talent residents and their histories taken from our oral history files.

From an oral history done in 2004 with Nellie and Paul Creel, 412 Creel Rd., Talent.

We arrived in Talent in 1949. We came from northern Oregon. We thought it was a nice place to live. Also, there was quite a bit of work here in saw mills. We had thought we would like to have done farm work. We were up in Elgin, but we just didn't have the money to get into it. We spent one year in Elgin. The snow one winter started falling in November and didn't stop until March. I came down and surveyed the area and there were a lot of mills and orchards here. We had two little girls - 9 and 3. A son was born here. All are in Oregon. Oldest is in Prospect, second is in Medford and our son is in Salem. We moved into this house. The house was actually a couple of little houses put together. Then we did some remodeling.

(Nellie) My husband built all the cabinets. He's done all the work - most of it. The bookcase. *(Paul)* It was kind of a hobby with me. The stove isn't legal anymore. We have gas heat. *(Nellie)* Paul built that corner. The two little houses were put together right here. I think the houses were moved from Phoenix. When we moved here the Pancakes were living here. That property over there was a peach orchard. There was nothing from here to the road. *(Talent Avenue)*

On that side is where the Tycksens live - on the corner where the Welburns live now. There was one family above us. There were big families of boys all around. Behind us were seven boys - the Denoma family. Mrs. Tycksen knows everything about everyone. Tycksen's had one girl and seven boys. The old Welburns lived back over there and they had fifteen children. The Lockwoods also had seven boys. They all went to school in Talent. The oldest started in the Fourth grade. We had a theater move in here down where all the houses are built. We owned all the way to the road. We had an acre and a half.

(Paul) I worked for Fir Milling over

in Ashland where Bi-Mart is now. I worked there for fifteen years. Then a couple of years at various places and then went to work for Boise Cascade. I retired in 1980. I did most of the work in the house after I retired. We had to build on when we had the boy. He was born in 1951.

We got water and sewer here. That was the biggest change. We were all on wells and septic tanks. Septic tanks didn't work because of the clay soil. We organized a sewer district. We weren't in Talent during the drought. Taxes kept going up. It was hard to get somebody in to take the cuttings of the grass and hay. It got so there wasn't anyone doing that kind of work. We didn't want a fire hazard. We sold it off in one piece. The first thing they did was come in and build these houses. They were low-income built, but those who bought could get the market price. The water is pressurized now.

We enjoyed the Hartley Fruit Market. They built a new one. We were here when they had an old one. Hanscom's was good on Valley View Road. That's where Mt. View homes are now. They had a marvelous truck garden. Newbry was our Senator. They also had the orchard. We were here during the flood of the 60's. Dams have helped a lot.

(Nellie) My ancestors were here for several generations. I don't know about my father's side. Mother came by train. My Mother walked from Oregon to Missouri three times. Grandfather got sick so they went back to Missouri. Then he got well and he wanted to come back. Mother was about 9 at the time. Her mother had 12 children. I think she had one on the way. She flew over it once and she could see the wagon trail - the cracks. She lived to be 90. My father came to Payette, Idaho. That's where he got acquainted with my mother and then went to Washington. That's where I was born.

(Paul) My father's family was up around Crestville. My mother came from South Dakota and settled around

Crestville. My dad was born in Texas. I don't know just where. When they opened the Oklahoma territory, my father sold popcorn and papers there. It was a tent city. His grandfather was a Texas ranger. He met his wife in Texas and they were in the Oklahoma land rush.

Grandmother's spinning wheel is in the museum in Boise. It was a hand-made one.

We had lots of snow here in 1949. We had to go over near John Day. We had just moved in. We had an oil stove. It snowed and closed the roads as we went out and opened them as we came back. We had never been over the Greensprings before. It was a foot deep in Ashland as we were leaving that day.

Mae Lowe was a character. That's why the road got the name Creel. She delivered the paper (*Talent News Flashes*) and wanted a street. She asked if we minded if we called it Creel Road or if we could think of something else. I couldn't. The Pancakes were the only other family and she didn't think it would be a good name for the street. She went into the county and had the name put on and we didn't know anything about it until the sign went up. We had nothing to do with it.

The school bus line was put in the year we came here. Before that the kids all walked. Brittson was mayor for a long time. He is the one that had Patio Village built. Chuck Roberts was our city police. Everyone loved him. I guess he still lives around here.

Before we came, there was a cannery on Front Street.

Talent (*Avenue*) was the old Pacific Highway. It was two lanes. Paul helped for a summer working on I-5 over the Siskiyou. We thought they would never have enough cars for the freeway!!



From Our Facebook Page

To read all the THS posts and information, "like" us on Facebook

Find us at: <https://www.facebook.com/talenthistory/>

Or go to www.facebook.com and type Talent Historical in the search bar at the top of the page. Then from the options shown, choose Talent Historical Society

In a daily post, we are following pioneer Welborn Beeson's diary entry from 150 years ago. (currently 1867)

Our Facebook page continues to be a source of information and updates about what's happening at the Talent Historical Society.

And as always we post Welborn Beeson's diary entries from 150 years ago. After Welborn and Kate's marriage last summer, his diary entries have become a bit more erratic with gaps of a couple to several days between writings. Life had been busy as he settles down into married life.

His relationship with his father, John, continues to be strained as he writes on December 3rd, 1866: "... .. Father has been at Holtons most of the day. He is now here in the house. It is singular what an unpleasat influence he has over all of us when he is here at home. Instead of being pleasant to me, to have him at home, It is very unpleasant, some times when he is in certain moods. Dearest Kate has been able to do a great deal of house work to day but I fear, rather too much for her own health. she is so anxious to have every thing look as nice as possible.

As always, finances are a problem as Welborn laments on Dec 6th Thursday. "four short months of wedded bliss oh! what happiness we have enjoyed. Father and Logan, have been ploughing. I have been riding around the county trying to borrow

some money, but Franklin says He that goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing, and It is true, I believe. I did not procure any I have just been figuring up the amount of my indebtedness and it sums up to nearly 1000.00 dollars in cash, besides a few debts to be paid in trade."

Christmas was spent quietly with none of the presents and decorations that we now take for granted. Still Welborn enjoys his first Christmas as a married man. Dec 25th "Christmas cloudy day quite pleasant Charly Holoway comenced work for me yesterday He and Logan have been thrashing all day. Father has been plowing. I have been spending Christmas with my loved Kate and a happy one I have spent. It is now windy and is going to rain. the first Christmas I ever spent with out Dear Mother to wish me a Merry Christmas, but my Dear Kate wished me it and she is so much like Dear Mother in every respect. She had a nice Christmas cake so much like Mother's that we almost thought Mother's Spirit had directed her how to make it If I believed in Spiritualism I should think that Mother's Spirit had entered Kates body. Dwight Griffin called and James Justice I paid Dwight all I owe him. I now owe this Christmas more than I

ever owed before in my life. I love you Kate, do you love me yes Dear Welborn"

Dec 31st Monday. "another fine day, and the last of the year, 1866, a year of great events to my life's page. I have lost the best Mother that ever was, and have found the best wife in the world. and oh! how happy I am to night. There is no one here but Kate and I, Father & Logan."

The couple learns that Kate's Father has died in California and she becomes quite sad. He tries to console her and writes, "but to day she feel's rather bad and I am staying in to keepe her company and write some letters of consolation to Mother and family. Charly is sowing wheat and Father and Logan are dragging on the sod ground, and thus our Friends leave us one by one dropping on the way side of lifes path they are with us for awhile and then suddenly disappear, never more to gladden us with their presence. Oh! how careful we should be, never by word or act to cause one pang of pain or trouble to the loved ones with us now for It may be to-morrow they will be gone forever from our view Dear Welborn it is certingly a butiful Diayo day oh I love you so Dear Welborn and I am Happy in youre love, Kate"



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Talent Irrigation District supplies the valley with much needed water for orchards and farmland. Jacob Wagner of Talent is credited with being the first to divert water from Wagner Creek to irrigate local farmland. Disputes over water rights between the miners and the farmers were common during the early settlement days. Water rights continue to be highly prized

From "Images of America - Talent" by Jan Wright of the Talent Historical Society, page 96. This book may be ordered through our online store or purchased directly at the Museum. The price is just \$14.95. This must have book documents Talent's early history through images and text and is published by Arcadia Publishing as part of its Images of America series.

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The Talent Sawmills and the George Zickefoose Family

Sometimes two stories are intertwined. Such is the case with the Talent Sawmills and the George Zickefoose family. We often read about a disaster, a car wreck or a fire and feel bad for the people involved, but we don't really know the whole story; the very personal story of those involved. What impact did the event have on a family and town.

Last Fall, THS member Chuck Zickefoose paid a visit to the Museum and asked about the Talent Sawmills where his Father had worked. After returning home, he sent information that he had including parts of a book his mother had written. I found the obituary of his father, George Zickefoose, as well as two letters, in our family files. THS has quite an extensive collection of family information at the Museum which is easily accessible to anyone wanting to do research on Talent residents.

The story actually begins with the Bagley family. According to an article in the June 3, 1967 Ashland Daily Tidings, Dr. Bagley came from Minnesota to Oregon and purchased 60 acres from Stearns on Anderson Creek where he had an orchard and started a small cannery. The cannery grew and because of lack of space, in 1912 moved from the ranch to Talent, onto land donated by the City of Talent. In 1924, the cannery moved to Ashland. The land was located along the railroad tracks at the corner of Colver Road and Front Street in Talent.

Years passed and a small sawmill operated on the site, but the land itself was still owned by the Bagley Canning Company. Around 1940, Mr. F. M. McKean purchased both the property and the mill machinery, fixtures and equipment, and proceeded to improve and enlarge the operation. The Talent Sawmills were born. Then in July 1950, a man named Hamacher purchased the sawmill.

Here the story takes a personal turn as seen through the eyes of Ethel Zicke-

foose. Born Ethel Jessica George, she married George Zickefoose on Dec. 13, 1930. George was born in Keystone, Oklahoma on January 27, 1910. The couple moved to Laveta, Colorado and then in April 1937 they moved again to Talent. Ethel self published her family's story and the following are excerpts from her writings.

Spring 1937 - George wasted no time looking for work. He would leave the house in the morning and return in the evening. There was a small sawmill in the northwest corner of Talent, along the railroad. It was owned and run by a family living in Talent. George spent quite a lot of time there watching the mill run. The mill was not hiring any men.

1939 - Several things happened about this time. George was still thinking about getting on at the sawmill. A new owner took over. His name was Frank McKean. He enlarged the operation and was hiring more men. George went to work helping load railroad cars with lumber. Sometimes it was flat cars sometimes boxcars. They worked from a dock built near the siding where the railroad cars were brought in for loading. The mill was at the corner of Colver Road and Front Street in Talent. They had a millpond, a huge burner sawmill and planning mill. In time, a log deck and space for stacked piles of lumber, when the market was slow.

Wartime 1942 - Talent sawmill, where George worked, had steady demand for all the lumber they could ship. A lot of it was going to the shipyards where they build Liberty ships for war supplies. George kept moving up in work he did around the mill; from car loading, he went to grading lumber as it moved along the belt. Mr. McKean found out George knew bookkeeping and office work, and moved him to the office.

January 6, 1956 - But I do remember the night, several years later, we were sound asleep and Jonas came banging on our door yelling, "Come on George, the mill is on fire?" George came home after daylight, and said they were able to save the planning mill, but the sawmill part was a total loss. A repairman had been there during the previous day, and had done some welding underneath. Some hot stuff evident-

ly had fallen into some shavings. The wind came up during the night and fanned it into a blaze. The night watchman saw it too late to get anyone there while it was beginning. The boss, John Hamacher, called the insurance company. The payment had just been mailed in. He asked if they had received the payment and the man said, "Yes." Mr. Hamacher said, "Good, because the mill just burned?" But the insurance company didn't pay because the check had not gone to the bank yet. How they got by with that, I don't understand. The planning mill still had lots of stacked lumber in the yard drying, so it went on working. It took quite a long time to finish that lumber, and then they shipped out. After that, they dismantled the mill tore, down the buildings, and bulldozed the land to leave it as near like it was before the mill was established.

In an instant, George found himself without a job. The mill went on to run for a couple more months and then shut down completely. George had worked himself up to a supervising role and in a letter written on Jan 10, 1956 to Howard Miner he writes, "Mac (McKean) had left the running of the thing (mill) to me along in 1943 sometime, I believe, so I've been in the capacity of Superintendent since then."

In a letter applying for a job dated March 28, 1956, he says that they "have seen the plant grow from a balancing wire and make shift, log butchering thing to a modern efficient band mill operation, with resaw in conjunction, we were cutting about 70m per eight hr. shift."

George Zickefoose died on April 28, 1958 just two years after the fire. He collapsed at 3:15 pm while loading a car at the Medford Corporation yards. He was 48 and survived by his wife and 5 children. His obituary says he had recently been employed by Medco.

The fire at the sawmill changed the Zickefoose family's life forever; taking away their steady income and financial security. The careless spark also changed the landscape of Talent as well, destroying one of the town's largest employers, and altering the face of our community forever; the fire's impact felt by both a family and a city in a very personal way.



Eventual Mill Site

Don't Forget!!!!

Talent Tomato Sale - Saturday, May 13th
Pre-order now online or stop by the Museum

At the Museum

In each issue, we showcase an interesting artifact or exhibit housed at our museum. Stop by and take a look!

There was a time when clothes were valuable items and when they became worn they weren't tossed aside easily. Holes were mended and children's clothes, in particular, were passed down from child to child. The art of mending was often learned by girls at a young age as they sat at their mother's elbow and watched as she painstakingly did her best to preserve a family's precious stock of clothing.

Darning is described as a sewing technique for repairing holes or worn areas in fabric using needle and thread alone. Hand darning employs the darning stitch, a simple running stitch in which the thread is "woven" in rows along the grain of the fabric, with the stitcher reversing direction at the end of each row, and then filling in the framework thus created, as if weaving. Darning is a traditional method for repairing fabric damage or holes that do not run along a seam, and where patching is impractical or would create discomfort for

the wearer, such as on the heel of a sock.

There is a special tool used for darning socks or stockings called a darning egg. This egg-shaped tool, made of stone, porcelain, wood, or similar hard material, is inserted into the toe or heel of the sock to hold it in the proper shape and provide a firm foundation for repairs. When the repairs are finished, the darning egg is removed.

Our darning egg was donated by Pamela Brabbin and is made of solid wood with a handle and ends in a flat oval shape. It measures 5 1/2" by 3 3/4" and can be found in the display case on the back wall.

While in good condition, it looks like it has had plenty of use. Who knows how many hours were spent patiently rescuing a sock from the trash bin. Although it is still possible to buy a darning egg today, I don't know anyone who actually darns socks. Convenience and low price have made this tool and darning socks a thing of the past.



Wooden Darning Egg

Thomas Doty - Storyteller

A Native View



*Photo: Boundary Springs,
headwaters of the Rogue River.*

Upriver Downriver

In the native world of southern Oregon -- in the landscape as well as in the Old Time stories -- there are two directions. Upriver and downriver. Upriver is to the east toward the rising sun and the beginning of the river. Downriver is to the west toward the setting sun and the Land of the Dead. For centuries, native folks have walked ancient trails along rivers and creeks, from village to village, out under the sun and inside the myths.



Thomas Doty is a noted Native Storyteller and author. Since 1981, he has traveled the countryside performing and teaching traditional and original stories. He is descended from Shasta and Takelma people, as well as from Irish and English settlers. The Takelma were the first people to live in the lands now called Talent.

Doty is the author of several books and his stories have been broadcast on Public Radio. His website at www.DotyCoyote.com contains a wealth of information and other topics in his "A Native View" series.

His captivating book "Doty Meets Coyote," can be purchased at our Museum or through our online store at <http://store.talenthistory.org/>.

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seats. Rather than one big loudspeaker, each car is provided with an individual loudspeaker, which clamps on the inside of the car door. Volume can be controlled on each speaker.

Operators of the two new outdoor theaters here have pointed out some of the features of the new projects which make them particularly attractive to families with small children, for invalids, for convalescents and for the hard of hearing. The projection booths are located in the middle of the parking area along with the refreshment stand and restrooms.

They are "come-as-you-are" theaters with complete privacy in your own car, perfect visibility, refreshments available, smoking permitted at any time, no babysitters needed, no parking problems, freedom of movement, and you won't bother your neighbor if you like popcorn and peanuts with your entertainment. Well, who could resist all those compelling reasons to rush to the drive-in movies.

Although, there were some drive-ins operating in the late 30's, they really didn't come into their own until after World War Two when a more mobile public and improved equipment led to their development all across the country. Their peak popularity came in the late 1950's and early 1960's, particularly in rural areas, with some 4,000 drive-ins spread across the United States. During the 1950's, the greater privacy afforded to patrons gave drive-ins a reputation as immoral, and they were labeled "passion pits" in the media.

A report showed that there were 3 drive-ins operating in Oregon in 1948. By 1958, that number had climbed to 69 reaching a peak. By 1972, there were 59.

Locally, two drive-ins opened during the same week in June, 1949. The Valley Drive-In was located between Medford and Central Point just off Highway 99. It was about a quarter-mile from the Medford city limits, on a lot behind the Niles Lumber Company. The Medford Mail Tribune wrote, on June 7th that, "the Valley Drive-In opened for the first time Sunday night to a large and curious crowd." It was widely known for its "dollar a carload" rates leading to some interesting maneuvers by patrons.

The Starlite Drive-In quickly followed on Thursday night June, 9th with their opening at 6:30 pm. They invited movie goers to come "enjoy movies under the

stars...just 2 1/2 miles south of Medford... Children under 10 admitted free, complete privacy, perfect vision and in-a-car speakers." The first movie showing was "A Letter to Three Wives."

The Grand opening of The Rogue Drive-In theatre occurred on April 15, 1953 with gates opening at 6 p.m. They touted having the "newest and finest projection and sound equipment and Southern Oregon's finest and most modern Snack Bar!" The Rogue was located at the corner of Crater Lake Avenue and Biddle Rd. where Witham's Truck Stop now resides.

Talent's own Lithia Drive-In was opened in 1954 with a car capacity of 400. It drew customers from the south end of the valley as well as from Medford. On summer week end nights with a popular movie playing, cars would often stretch down the highway waiting to turn right onto Creel Rd and get in line for their turn to enter. Music blared and children shouted. Friends greeted friends and cars jockeyed for the best spots.

Several factors lead to the decline of drive-ins including competition from home entertainment, from color television to VCR's and video rentals. The 1970's oil crisis as well as the widespread adoption of daylight saving time (which made the shows start an hour later) all made it harder for drive-ins to operate successfully. By 1987, there were only 17 drive-ins left in Oregon and only 11 survived in 1999. The last number I could find listed 6,

but none in the southern part of the state. The Lithia Drive-In closed in 1984 some 30 years after it had opened.

The youth of today seemingly have many advantages over those long ago teenagers; video games, the internet and electronic devices galore. I picture them huddled in their bedrooms, alone, watching a movie on their tiny cell phone screens. Alas, never knowing the fun, the thrill of a home town drive-in. That special mixing of social strata where you could go with your friends to see the latest attraction. Where a glance at the car next to you might reveal your favorite teacher or your neighbor who lived down the street, all of you enjoying a communal night out at the movies. Those poor, deprived youngsters of today will never know the true meaning of a BIG screen.

Today, in the present, when I drive down South Pacific Highway and pass the Lithia Drive-In's former location, I can almost smell the warm popcorn and hear the blare of a movie sound track; the von Trapp family singing across the Alps, Clint Eastwood taking on the bad guys in the old West or the roar of the motorcycles from "Easy Rider". I smile as I remember a special first date and a warm, summer night spent enjoying a movie.

Drive-in movies were more than a place to go for entertainment. They were a signature icon for anyone growing up in that era. Talent's Lithia Drive-In was an important part of Rogue Valley's history and will be remembered fondly by anyone who was fortunate enough to spend a pleasant evening there.



Lithia Drive-In looking to the east from the concession stand August 1981



Talent Historical Society
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Upcoming Events

	Mar. 14	THS Board Meeting	6:00 pm	At the Museum	
	Mar. 28	Tuesday Evening at the Museum	6:30 - 8:00 pm	Original Historical poetry- Bob Casebeer	
	Apr. 11	THS Board Meeting	6:00 pm	At the Museum	
	Apr. 25	Tuesday Evening at the Museum	6:30 - 8:00 pm	Tomato Tales, Myths, & Legends	
	April 29	Talent Poker Tour	1:00 pm - ?	At the Museum	
	May 9	THS Board Meeting	6:00 pm	At the Museum	
	May 13	Talent Tomato Sale	8:00 am - 2:00 pm	At the Museum	
	May 23	Tuesday Evening at the Museum	6:30 - 8:00 pm	Area's Fruit Labels - Sue Naumes	



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