

History of Bigham's Knoll – Jacksonville's "School House Hill"

525 East E Street
Jacksonville, Oregon

**"There are few places where history and modern life are so linked as
Jacksonville."**

George Kramer, 2001

**"A SCHOOL IS THE FOCAL POINT IN A COMMUNITY,
PARTICULARLY IN A SMALL TOWN".**

Dr. F. D. Haines, 1967

Jacksonville School District No. 1, organized July 19, 1954.

Assembled and typed by Larry Smith

541-899-7402

December 2005

("Bigham's" and "Bighams", along with "Pool" and "Poole" are used interchangeably within the historic record.)

The Old School site includes six tax lots, currently tax-exempt, with a Real Market Value according to the Assessor of \$1.2million.

The source for most of the pre-1950 material comes from the archives of the Southern Oregon Historical Society. The post-1950 information about the Old School is from files maintained by Larry Smith. Personal interviews and Dr. Francis Haines' book, JACKSONVILLE – BIOGRAPHY OF A GOLD CAMP (1967) were also valuable sources for Bighams Knoll history.

George Kramer, historic consultant, supplied additional information and dates from his extensive database.

Note: Several of the burning dates for the Bighams Knoll schoolhouses conflict with other sources. I have tried to be as accurate as possible, but several conflicted dates remain.

It was January of 1852 when two young mule packers, James Poole and James Cluggage, hauling supplies from the Willamette Valley to the gold fields of California decided to camp for the night on the banks of Daisy Creek. They pitched their tents on that momentous night within the present-day corporate limits of Jacksonville. The following morning, so spins one story, as they broke camp with the intent of heading south the two men discovered one of the largest gold strikes in the history of Oregon. Since they had plenty of supplies with them, they spend the next several days skimming off the best of the placer gold.

Within several months nearly 1,000 mostly single men had moved into the area and founded the tent city of Table Rock City, which eventually was renamed Jacksonville.

By the summer of 1852, Cluggage and Poole, wanting to add to their several mining claims, and looking forward to a more permanent future, the two men filed on several donation land claims. Two of their land claims were located side by side in Township No. 37 S, Range 2 West and eventually became the commercial heart of Jacksonville.

Cluggage's donation land claim totaled 160 acres.

Pool's donation land claim totaled 306 acres.

It was a parcel carved from Cluggage and Pool's DC lands that was sold to John Bigham in 1859 and then in turn sold or given to Jacksonville School District No. 1 in 1867.

Thus the name: **Bigham's Knoll.**

“John Bigham – Early Jacksonville settler who gave land on which the first public school was built. One of his daughters, Elizabeth A., married Henry Klippel.” (accession records 68-140-2. SOHS has picture albums, Ambrose tintypes,

daguerreotypes, and photographs from the Bigham family. *Accession records 70-84*

John Bigham, along with his family and several friends, totaling a party of 10, crossed the Great Plains by ox team. At Salt Lake, Utah, John and his wife decided to come to Oregon. With two ox teams they crossed the Cascade Mountains April 14, 1853. On the Snake River they were saved from massacre by the Indians by John winning the good favor of the chief. In crossing the plains they had many exciting experiences. The family wintered in the Foster settlement on the Clackamas River, and in 1854 the Bigham family moved to Jacksonville. (*Information taken from son William Bigham's obituary, Southern Oregon Pioneer Assn records vol. 3. SOHS. Written Oct. 16, 1924*)

John Bigham died, age 67, at the Jacksonville home of his son-in-law, Henry Klippel.

1860 Jacksonville Census

John Bigham, 43 – Farmer – b. Kentucky

Alley A., 41 – b. N. Carolina

William H., 15 – b. Missouri

Nancy R, 10 – b. Missouri

Alley A, 7 – b. Missouri

Cordelia, 4 – b. Oregon

Mary F., 1 – b. Oregon

Jackson County Land records (book 1, page 202) show a land sale mortgage between John Bigham and Arthur Langell to James R. Pool. The mortgage of \$15,900 was first recorded on December 14, 1859 and then fully recorded on December 22, 1859.

“The following des. tract being a part of the J.R. Pool Donation Land Claim and also a part of the James Cluggage Donation Land Claim.”

17 December 1859

James Poole deeds land on N.E. Corner of Donation Land Clam 37 to the following people:

John Bigham
N. Langell
J. McLaughlin
Henry Klippel
J.N.T. Miller
Love and Bilger

Donation Land Claim 37 is roughly bounded by 5th and “C” streets and Hueners Lane, that surrounds the Old Jacksonville School site that John Bigham either sold or gave to School District No. 1.

But then comes the lawsuit of James R. Pool, Plaintiff, vs. John Bigham and Arthur Langell, et.al. Defendants. June 20, 1864, a judgment is found in favor of James Pool and the defendants’ property is ordered by the judge to be sold.

The property is sold by W.A. Owen, Sheriff of Jackson Co, Oregon for the sum of \$12,000 to James R. Pool the Plaintiff. The \$12,000 was applied in payment of the above judgment to James R. Pool. “The judgment is not fully paid, but I find that no contributions have been issued on the judgment to keep it alive.” (*Meaning of this statement is unclear.*) Sale settled: Nov. 15, 1866.

It would be interesting to follow this judgment up and see if any of the Bigham’s Knoll property was involved in this judgment. John Bigham must have still had a significant amount of land in 1867 to be able to sell or give the Knoll to the School District.

The first public school district in Jackson County was organized in Jacksonville, August 11, 1854. School District Number One.

Many interruptions to the already short school year occurred during the nearly first two decades of the school’s existence because of Indian Wars, sickness, economic down turns and the lack of money and pupil interest.

The School District Trustees in 1866, encouraged by the success of St. Mary’s

Parochial School, and faced with an influx of student overflowing the town's original N. Oregon Street schoolhouse, resolved to build a new school on Bigham's Knoll. They set aside \$1600 to be paid to David Linn, the builder, who industriously had at it, and by 1868, only fourteen years after the initial steps were taken back in 1854, Jacksonville finally had its own brand new public school building. *The Table Rock Sentinel April 1983 – page 16. SOHS*

\$600 was raised for a two-story frame building. An additional \$500 was eventually needed to finish the building the following year. The bell for the new schoolhouse was paid for by a ball and minstrel show brought to town by Banker CC Beekman. The old school house on N. Oregon was given away to Sexton Sergeant Robert Dunlap in payment of a school district debt of \$137. *(summarized from notes found in the SOHS archive)*

Saturday, September 29, 1866 – from the *Oregon Sentinel* – **School Property** – The Jacksonville School District has purchased the Bigham Knoll, at a cost of three thousand dollars, and we understand the house will be fitted for schoolrooms immediately. (Apparently there was a building already located at the top of the hill that was turned into a school house. Perhaps it was the Bigham house. This would explain the higher purchase price than what would have been paid for just open land. The building burned down four years later in 1870.)

School District No 1 – Jacksonville Phoenix Ins. Co. (1868 – 69) (1869 – 1870) (1870 – 1871) Renewal of policy No 6004 as follows: \$1800 on two story frame School House, ceiled (sic) with wood and \$200 on the School House furniture therein, situated on Bighams Knoll in the town of Jacksonville, Jackson Co. Ore., and occupied as a district School House. Ins. \$2,000. *(From a typed note found in the files in the SOHS. A handwritten note says: Jacksonville School – 1865. “Which later burned – Located on the Bigham Don. Land Claim”.) (Probably John B) Father Williams.*

From typed notes found in the archives of the SOHS – *Written sometime between 1903 – 1906*) A single room cabin on the Old Stage Road known as the McBee place served as a schoolhouse until 1867 when increasing population made a

larger building a necessity. The present schoolhouse hill, a wooded knoll east of town, was purchased, and it was voted to raise \$600 for a 2-story frame building. An additional \$550 was needed to finish it the following year. Unfortunately it burned down, and a larger 4-room building took its place. This too went up in flames in 1901, and the present 2-story brick structure, still in use, was erected.

The first school on Bigham's Knoll was built in 1867. A two-room building. On the hill where the present school stands. The school burned in 1870. It was insured for the first time in 1868 for \$2,000. Additon added 1878. Burned Jan. 25, 1903. *(From handwritten notes found at the SOHS. No source given. No mention of the supposed 1870 fire.)*

January 30th, 1868 – *from the financial ledger for Jackson County* – “The old District school house was sold to R. S. Dunlap for \$137, which was the amount the District owed him for improvements – digging well, making fences, walks, etc – about the new school house.”

According to stories from the John Bigham family, Bigham's Knoll was donated to School District #1. But the County's 1868 financial ledger shows a \$3,000 warrant issued to Pool and Klippel for the purchase of “school property”. This may have been for several additional lots surrounding Bigham's Knoll. An additional \$300 was spent on legal services, surveying, and lumber for a fence.

Between July 13th, 1866 and January 30, 1868 the District spent \$2829. 40 building and furnishing the new building. “fence posts, cord wood, stove and pipe, seats, lumber, insurance, a tin pail, building the belfry and stairs, two brooms, a box of crayons, flagstaff, awnings, windows, 30 desks, chairs.” No mention of labor for building the building.

The same ledger reports that the District contained 242 “scholars” between the ages of 4 and 30. 195 scholars signed up to attend two quarters of school. Average attendance: 73 scholars divided between two teachers who were paid \$500 each. Boys out numbered the girls two to one.

Tuition was \$5.00 per quarter.

School Records – Vol. One Manuscript #423 folder 8

1867 Bills Paid:

June 11 Linn and Hall work on School House as per contract \$1600

Nov. 19 Linn and Hall – extra work on School House \$ 340

J.A. Carter and Sons – bill for painting school House dated Oct. 12, 1874 - \$162.75; paid \$84.18, with the \$78.57 not paid for want of funds.

The collection of adequate school taxes was a perennial problem. Teachers who indulged in intoxicating drink and games of chance were immediately dismissed. Tenure for teachers in the 1880s and 90s was unheard of, and teachers moved on readily rarely staying more than a year or two. In 1896, the school's principal was reprimanded by the school board for requesting chemicals for chemistry demonstrations. The board held that the teachers' time was already taken up with hearing recitations and no time was available for such demonstrations.

School business in small towns, for some reason, became a microcosm for the political fights that were waged in Jacksonville. Principals rarely lasted two or more years. Teachers were held to strict standards. Could not marry. Could not court, or drink. They were expected to attend church. Of course the School Board recessed to the local taverns after making these personally invasive rules.

Vestiges of these rules continued into the 1970s when the Medford School District ruled that teachers could not hold down a second job. "Teaching is a full-time job", they reasoned.

George Wendt wrote in 1970 that the wooden school building had two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs. "I don't remember just when that school burnt down. It was about 1899. I was in the third grade. Then the year 1903 the building burnt down. We were then stationed in temporary quarters in the so call Old Church on the upper corner of China Town. Then I finished up to the 8th grade in the present school on the hill." (His dates do not quite fit the record.) "There was a big picket fence

around the school grounds and from the gate up to the school building. The girls played on one side and the boys on the other. No one ever dared to cross the boarder lines. There was a well on the flat close to the gate with a pictur (sic) pump part full with his hand over the front of the pump and drank out of the pump, then let the rest of the water go on the platform and back down in the well. Recreation for the girls was jump rope, drop the handkerchief, tag, hop scotch and stuff like that, and the boys liked skating in the mud, marbles, spinning tips, swinging from the trees, kicking a blown up hog bladder for foot ball, base ball, bull frog and just standing around eating apples. The toilets were one on the girls' side and one on the boys' side. I don't think they were ever cleaned out. Lots of flies. They were just holes in the ground with an old fashioned privy with three holes. They didn't have toilet paper in those days yet so each boy when he went there had to be sure he tore a leaf out of his tablet. *(Geo. Wendt died in 1971 – one year after writing his memories. His full recollections are on file with the SOHS)*

October 1875, a sufficient school tax was passed to allow the school district to finally discard the despised tuition fee.

In the early morning of January 25, 1903, the wooden 1870s two-story frame schoolhouse burned to the ground. School was held in local churches, assembly halls and the local brewery. *(The January 25 date is confirmed in the Molly Britt diary.)*

Pinto Colvig (Bozo the Clown) once wrote in about 1960 “Ah! The old White (not red) little wooden schoolhouse on the knoll. Built in the early ‘60s. (Records say built in 1870.)). So full of woodpecker holes it was ready to collapse. Wasn't it a beautiful sight the dark, snowy night when that old school house burned down? All the old women and little girls cried – and us boys were glad. Next day we scratched in the ruins and collected souvenirs for trading. I gathered several of the *skeleton's bones that rated very high in value when trading for things with the other kids. “Din” Fielder traded me a swell magnifying glass for a piece of the skeleton's jaw bone (with three teeth)...but later Buck Dunford (town bully) took it away from me; saying that Dink had swiped it from him. I wasn't one who'd argue with Buck. Nobody was.” *Pinto Colvig (aka: Bozo the Clown)*

*The school principal had obtained the skeleton from the Sheriff following the death of a jailed prisoner. The teacher had boiled the body for several weeks in the woods above Britt so that he could reassemble a clean skeleton

School District Number 1 managed to scrape together \$10,500 to build and furnish a new “fireproof” ornate brick building, which soon became, albeit for only two years, the pride of Jacksonville.

January 12 – February 6, 1903 “Two weeks vacation on account of the fire”, (Oregon School register and record book found tossed into the Old School attic about 1980, along with many other records.)

December – January, 1903 – 1904, “One week closed on account of Small Pox” (Oregon School register and record book found tossed into the Old School attic about 1980, along with many other records that have since been lost.)

January 31, 1903 (*a penciled notation scribbled on the news article.*)

Source unsure, but may be the Jacksonville Post

THE BURNING OF THE JACKSONVILLE SCHOOL HOUSE

All is quiet tonight in dear old Jacksonville,
For near all the people are fast asleep;
But Marshal Murphy is still on the street;
The clock strikes three, and all is still.

Mr. Murphy is now off his beat.
And after blowing out the light,
Turns his weary feet homeward,

To retire for the night.

After going upstairs to bed,
“Listen!” what is that dog
Of mine barking at now?”
The marshal quickly said.

Yes, “Deputy Marshal Bird,”
As he has been called,
Made himself clearly heard
In a great and noble cause.

The master, going to the window to ascertain
The matter,
Came rushing back with a terrible clatter.
“Great Heavens! Fire! Fire! Fire!”
The words vibrated as if sent by wire.

Up the street he hurriedly goes,
Firing a pistol here and there.
But never stopping even to load:
As the bullets shot upward through the air.

The fire bell is reached and its loud knells,
As they sound through the night.
Echo and re-echo into terrible yells,
And wake many people up in a fright.

Now the town is roused, and through the crowd
Spread inquires clear and loud:
Till a voice, excited and shrill
Rings out, “Tis the dear old School House
On the Hill.”

The flames grew higher and higher,
And like many a structure of great story,
“The dear old School House” is lost in the fire.
But has pupils left to tell its story.

O, the memories tender!
That it has to so many rendered,
Will live to tell its history,
Though its destruction remains a mystery.

The bell’s great tongue is forever still,
Never again to sound its silver peals o’er
Jacksonville,
We may listen at nine, at one, at four;
But its summons to duty we hear no more.

But all of such work of man
Is perishable, we say.
Only his good deeds
Remain to everlasting day.

Miss A.M. of Jacksonville Oregon

In December 14, 1906 a faulty furnace caused an all-consuming fire that left only the outer walls of the new two year-old brick schoolhouse. Once again the district’s school students were forced into temporary learning quarters in churches, storage sheds, and “the town hall”. (Most likely Old City Hall.) The loss, which included the contents, was estimated at \$15,000, of which only \$10,000 was covered by insurance. (Mail Tribune, Dec. 14, 1906)

Within a few months the school board was again authorizing construction of a new school building at a cost of \$14,500. The old foundation and some of the original brick was re-used in the new building. The town was especially proud of its new two-

story fireproof building with steam heat, a new water system and indoor plumbing, which did away with the school's well and "back houses."

School House Burned

(No date or source given except for "Jacksonville, Oregon, Friday)

For the second time in a few years Jacksonville has lost its schoolhouse by fire.

The old one was a big frame structure, that had been used for many years and had nearly outgrown its usefulness. One night, at a late hour, for reasons that will never be known somebody set fire to it and destroyed it, together with its contents.

Its successor was soon afterward built on the same site and cost in the neighborhood of \$12,000. Its heating apparatus, nearly always defective, doubtless was the cause of the fire Thursday evening that burned to the inside of the structure, leaving only the brick walls standing.

The alarm was turned in by School Superintendent Daily, who had been informed by a boy, named Florence Hall, that he had seen flames in the building. The fire department quickly responded, but nothing could be done to stay the conflagration.

The total loss, which includes the contents, consisting of books, piano, apparatus, laboratory, etc., is estimated at \$15,000 on which there is insurance of about \$10,000.

The directors of the district held a meeting the next day, and it was decided to resume studies Monday; the town hall, churches and other buildings having been placed at their disposal.

Another schoolhouse will be built on the site as soon as possible.

December 14, 1906 (Friday). Two-year old Jacksonville School burns to ground. Loss will exceed \$15,000. Insurance is \$10,000. Glare seen in Eagle Point. (*Medford Mail Tribune*)

JACKSONVILLE SCHOOL AGAIN BURNED

Mysterious Fire Thursday Evening Destroys
New Brick Structure --- loss \$15,000

(Source not listed, but may be the *Jacksonville Post*. A handwritten date says: December 13, 1905, but according to the *Mail Tribune*, the date most likely should be "1906".)

Jacksonville's fine new brick school building, built two years ago at a cost of over \$12,000, to replace the old structure which served the district so long before it became a mark for the fire fiend, went up in smoke Thursday evening. The fire originated in the basement and was discovered at 5:30 p.m., it had gained such headway that all efforts to stay it was futile, burning not only the valuable Building but also the school library, the books of the pupils and a new \$300 piano recently added to the school's excellent equipment. The total loss is estimated at \$15,000. The insurance arrived upon building and furniture is an aggregation of \$10,000.

The origin of the fire seems to be a mystery. The building was heated by a furnace in the basement whence the flames first emerged, but it had been carefully inspected it is said, but a short time before the fire broke out, and there is speculation as to the possibility of the disaster being due to the work of some incendiary.

The Jacksonville school building was a modern structure and the people of Jacksonville took much pride in it. It was built by H. Snook, who has had the contract

for so many of the new school buildings of the better class in Oregon for several years past. Its destruction is a serious blow not only from a monetary point of view but also on account of the inconvenience it will occasion in disturbing the work of the schools in the middle of the year. Prof. J. Percy Wells, of Ashland, is principal of the Jacksonville schools. The board of directors will provide temporary quarters.

December 1906, “First three month’s records burned”, (Oregon School register and record book found tossed into the Old School attic about 1980, along with many other records.)

January 27, 1908 New Jacksonville brick schoolhouse occupied.
(*Jacksonville Post*)

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**Jacksonville’s School Building
One of the Handsomest and Best
Appointed Schools in the State**

**Jacksonville Post
January 31, 1908**

As the man said, after he had been trying unsuccessfully for an hour to coax a calf into the barn with a pail of milk when the hired girl came along and carried it in by its ears and tail. “I like a man who does things.”

Certainly the gentlemen, who have had the supervision of the building of the new Jacksonville schoolhouse are the kind of men who do things.

From basement to roof, both inside and out, the completeness, durability and

appearance of the building is one of the finest that was ever erected in the state of Oregon. Surely the taxpayers of Jacksonville and vicinity should be proud of their new school building and the board of trustees who have worked so diligently and faithfully to bring about such admirable results.

The building is two stories in height with a basement, built of brick and concrete, absolutely fire proof, steam heated, has an excellent water system, electric lighted, roomy, light and well ventilated. The outside dimensions are 97 feet, 10 inches by 56 feet. It will cost within the neighborhood of \$20,000, and will be insured as near its cost as is possible. The building will be ready for occupancy next Monday, Jan. 27.

In addition to this a room has been fitted up in the basement and the janitor will always be present day and night. It is estimated that a half tier of wood a day will be amply sufficient to heat the building, while two pounds of steam will be all that is required per day to keep the building comfortable. About six gallons of water will be enough to furnish steam for each day. The trustees are more than pleased with Mr. Aitken's excellent work, as not a particle of trouble has been experienced since the plant was first installed. The boiler comes from Chicago, and is one of the best manufactured. It has an automatic heat register, so that when a certain amount of steam is raised the register shuts off the heat and no possible accidents can occur.

A playroom is being fitted up in the basement 65 by 56 feet. A library and teachers room has also been fitted up in the second story.

Lack of space forbids a description of the building in detail, but the board of trustees have announced that all those interested are cordially invited to inspect the building today. There will be attendants in charge to show the guests over the different departments and it will be well worth the reader's while to take time to look the building over.

The inside of the building is one of the handsomest anywhere. The colors harmonize beautifully while the finish is artistic in every particular. The steps leading to the upper rooms are made of hardwood and every part of the building has been built both for durability and beauty. There are six schoolrooms, all 32 by 25 feet, the first floor

to be occupied by the primary and intermediate grades. A great deal of new furniture has been purchased for these rooms. Each teacher has her or his own private locker near the entrance of the room and each room has two doors.

The large assembly room is beautifully furnished and has a large stage fitted with electric footlights.

A new 500-pound bell has been ordered and a handsome new flag has arrived.

An interesting feature of the new building is the steam heating plant which was installed by W.A. Aitken of Medford and which cost \$2275. The trustees are more than pleased with Mr. Aitken's excellent work, and not a particle of trouble has been experienced since the plant was first installed. In the first place everything connected with the plant is fireproof. Where it was necessary to use wood, metal lath and plaster have been put on, and the large flue enters a solid wall of concrete and brick and is at least eight feet from any wood.

A pipe line is being laid from G.E. Neuber's water tank to the school building and water will gravitate from there and a hydrant will be placed in the basement from which place the janitor will distribute water for drinking purposes to the various departments.

So we say hats off to Messrs Beekman, Kenney and Applegate, for they are the real men behind this beautiful and commodious school building; the men who are responsible for bringing to Jacksonville the handsomest and safest school building this district ever had.

This building was planned by Medford's brilliant young architect, John McIntosh.

The current Jacksonville schoolhouse is correctly dated at 1908. According to local newspaper accounts, the wooden school building burned in January 25, 1903 (Ashland Daily Tidings, 26-Jan-1903, 3:2). H. Snook started a replacement wood-frame building on the site in May 1903 this structure was destroyed by fire on December 13, 1906. Construction of a new building, this time in fireproof brick, was

underway by late summer of the following year, when the paper reported that brick had arrived at the site (Jacksonville Post, 24-August-1907, 2:1). Gail Evans dates the current building at 1907-1908, from designs by Medford architect John McIntosh with Charles Veghte serving as the primary contractor (Evans, 1980, Site No. 289, Primary) McIntosh is primarily remembered as the architect of Medford's Central Fire Hall (at 6th and Front streets) and the Medford Carnegie Library, both of which are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Veghte built the fine 1906 Central Point Elementary School, recently renovated for use as District No. 6 Administration Offices. George Kramer 2005.

During World War 1, with basketball all the rage in local high schools, the school board rented the U.S. Hotel Ballroom for use as a basketball court. The small upstairs ballroom was considered luxurious when compared to the facilities (barns and chicken sheds) that other schools had available to them.

When word was received in Jacksonville, late one night, of the signing of the Peace Treaty in 1917, the school janitor, J.W. Rock, rang the schoolhouse bell in celebration. Lacking a principal and teachers and an adequate supply of students (*many of the young men had left town to serve in the War.*) the high school was unable to stay open. The few remaining high school students were transported by the RR Railway to Medford High for a year. (*Information pulled from oral interviews conducted by Jacksonville 5th graders in 1980.*)

February 11, 1924 (Monday) Jacksonville voters approve \$7,500 bond for construction of a new 5,000 square foot school gymnasium at election. Work on new facility to start immediately. (From the *Medford Mail Tribune*) Jacksonville's new gym was one of first and finest high school gyms in the County. The school's trophy case was mute testimony to several championship teams produced by the school's athletic program in the 1930s and 1940s and 1950s. Two outstanding events were the winning of the state "B" basketball title in 1948 and the "whipping" of the Medford High's eleven-man football team. The last trophy won was by the second place state championship track team with only three members in 1959.

1936 – A 2500 square foot - two story – two-room stack of classrooms is

added to the rear of the main brick building. The new addition is stuccoed rather than bricked.

The metal-clad frame building (built as a bus barn) was reportedly built in the 1940s

1946/47 – a new 1,000 square foot classroom is built onto the gym, attached to the back of the stage. Some time between 1924 and 1947 restrooms and dressing rooms were added between the two buildings; mostly done by donated labor. Fathers of high school students would come in after work and work on the buildings. The 1600 square foot basement for the boys' locker room, located beneath the stage, was dug out by delinquent high school boys serving detention.

1947-1948 – Three new 600 square foot classrooms are added to the gym annex. The school district floated a \$4,000 bond issue to pay for the new addition. The flat roof leaked continually until about 1995 when Cascade Christian built a hip roof over the top of the annex classrooms matching the look of the main building.

The 1200 square foot - cinderblock Music Building, built by James Jack, opened in 1950 (*Medford Mail Tribune*, 15-September- 1950)

November 1954 – The new Jacksonville Elementary School opened Monday for classes according to Sup. Clyde Sutherland. A total of 125 students from grades 1 through 4 will use the facilities. Total cost of the new building will be \$102,000. The entire faculty turned out on Saturday, and with the aid of three trucks, moved desks and teacher supply items. The students carried their personal belongings over to the new building on Friday.

April 16, 1959 Jacksonville School District #1 votes to consolidate into the “maw of Medford”. Unable to service bonding debt incurred in the building of the new Primary School in 1954, and unwilling and unable to spend the money needed to provide for a modern high school building, the residents of Jacksonville decide the easiest solution is to accept the inevitable and consolidate with the Medford School District. It was a sad day for most when the town realized they were finally losing

their high school because they could no longer afford to update overcrowded and aging facilities. The merger forced a change in the community; the town had lost its high school and local secondary students were to be bussed into Medford. Jacksonville had lost its community focal point.

The upper story of the old building was shut up. Two classrooms, located on the main floor, were occupied by the fourth grades. The school offices were moved down from the top story, along with the library. Fifth and sixth graders used the four-classroom gym annex. As the second story deteriorated from the lack of use, the School District eventually removed the windows some time in the 1970s and boarded up the second story giving the old 1908 building an abandoned, eerie look.

During the summer of 1960 the aging bell tower was removed. Photos taken only two years after the school building was built show the tower beginning to leak rainwater to the point where the bricks beneath the tower were showing signs of erosion. While the tower hole and roof were exposed to the elements that summer weekend a major thunderstorm hit Jacksonville. According to the janitor on duty at the time water poured down through all three floors. He said that he mopped up water in the basement. Extensive water damage caused the second floor plaster ceilings to collapse. (Carl Meadows – 1966)

In a 1978 report filed by Afseth, Jacobs and Schmits Architects they state that it would take \$979,503 to restore the Old School building to be fully functional as an elementary school. The plan called for the opening of the second story and adding a brick veneer to the 1930s addition. The Medford School Board rejected the idea of spending that amount of money on the old building and went ahead with plans to build a new \$2m school on the Primary School site on Hueners Lane. The main reason for abandoning the Old School site was the prospect of joining the two school campuses.

April 11, 1980 JV Nugget This week, the Jacksonville School is celebrating its 125th birthday. This is the time for all ex students, teachers, workers, and friends of the old School to assemble and just talk over the 'good old times.' We wish to compliment

Larry Smith, teacher, and all those who assisted him with the preparation of Jacksonville School's 125th birthday.

Written in 1980 for the school's 125th anniversary. "What is the future for Bigham's Knoll? A proposed 1980 bond issue calls for the building of a new elementary school at the primary site. Presently there is strong community support to preserve the old historic building, but who is going to pay for the restoration? The school district? City? Historical Society? Money remains scarce. Things haven't changed, have they?"
L.S.

February 1981 JV Nugget

UPCOMING MEETING TO DISCUSS SCHOOL'S FUTURE

Input needed from all interested. The deadlines are closing in and concern about the Old School's future is being felt by many residents.

Now, it appears, they will have an opportunity to discuss their concerns with 549c superintendent Dr. Klein on Feb. 10 at 7:30 p.m. at the school library.

Dr. Klein was invited to a meeting of the Jacksonville school citizens advisory committee but committee members hope as many residents as possible will be able to attend.

Jacksonville elementary is set to consolidate on the Hueners Land site in November of 1982 (they missed the deadline. Moved April 1963), which would leave the old building, the library, and the gym/classroom addition vacant. In the past the school district has indicated an interest in turning the property and land over to the city of Jacksonville, but no money amount has ever been decided on. It is not sure whether the city would have "first crack" at the property or whether it would have to be offered at open bidding. Several residents, including Viola Davis, have been looking into the

various uses that could be made of the building and the repairs that would have to be made. Mayor Tom Parks indicated that he has received a number of calls from people concerned with maintaining the property for city use. The Jackson County library system is interested in renting from 2 – 3,000 square feet of building space for the Jacksonville branch. Several people are concerned about keeping the playgrounds and tennis courts as they are.

Perhaps the answer lies in citizens banding together in a unified effort, but the first stop has to be getting 549c to commit itself regarding its plans for keeping, leasing out, or selling the property.

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March 13, 1981 JV Nugget –

School's Future Still Unknown

Apathy Bottom Line

March 31, 1981 The Medford School Board decides to float \$35,000,000 in construction bonds to build several new schools. Jacksonville Elementary School will receive about \$2 million for a new addition to the 1954 primary School down on Hueners Lane.

April 1983 – Jacksonville Elementary School moves into their new \$2m school down on Hueners Lane. Bigham's Knoll is abandoned as public school site for the first time in 116 years. Future of the buildings and site are uncertain.

February 1993 – The Jacksonville City Council adopted a resolution to support the efforts to acquire the Old School site, to preserve the buildings and grounds for public use by City government and community groups. The City by this resolution agreed to negotiate with 549c to achieve the goals of the resolution. The Jacksonville Historic School Site Preservation Corp. would then proceed to negotiate to acquire the property with the intention to turn it to City ownership.

April 8, 1993 – the City of Jacksonville notified the Medford School District 549c that they were in violation of a Conditional Use permit in regard to occupancy and

degradation of the buildings on the Old School property.

April 9, 1993. JV Nugget Next Tuesday morning, April 13, at 9 a.m. at the County Sheriff's Department, bidding on the old Jacksonville School Building and grounds will begin....School District 549c holds a \$243,000 mortgage along with expenses of sale, and a bid of \$250,000 from Cascade Christian High School... Everyone in Jacksonville, and especially the alumni and city council wish the (old school) committee, the best in their pursuit of this most important part of Jacksonville's past history.

April 13, 1993 – A Sheriff's sale was held in the basement of the Jackson County Jail did not produce any bidders other than 549c. The minimum acceptable sale price was declared as \$263,6667.73, with interest to accrue at \$53.44 per day. The bid by 549c completed the foreclosure action and returned the ownership of the property to 549c. (Please see the May, 1993 issue of the *Jacksonville Review* to learn in detail why the Old School Corporation backed off on the purchase.)

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Mail Tribune May 28, 1993.

Group pushes plan to restore old school Much of what visitors saw when they toured the old elementary school Thursday night wasn't pretty. Spider webs clogged with dead insects clung to windows. Other windows were boarded up. Paint peeled from some walls, and an obscenity had been spray-painted on at least one.

But the 50 or so visitors also heard what they could do to help restore the turn-of-the-century school to its former glory – and breathe new life into it as a community center.

A group of activists is pushing ahead with plans to raise more than \$1 million needed to renovate the school at 525 East E St.

Many of the activists serve on the board for the Jacksonville Historic School Site Preservation Committee, a non-profit corporation established three years ago to buy

the site and turn it into a community center. Even though the corporation is several months away from making a bid to buy the site, it's looking for community members to help out.

Corporation members envision the site housing city administrative offices and the police and fire department, plus youth and senior centers and possibly offices for such groups as the Britt Festival and the Rogue Valley Symphony.

Dough Skelton, an architect working for the corporation, said the building is structurally sound but needs extensive renovation.

The historic building, which is 1908, needs replacement of the boiler, removal of asbestos and underground oil tanks, and addition of handicapped access, Skelton said.

He said in 1989 he estimated the cost of renovating the building at \$1.4 million.

The Medford School District owned the property until 1983, when it moved Jacksonville Elementary to a site on Hueners Lane. The district sold the E Street land to the private Light Valley Waldorf School.

The Medford district foreclosed on Waldorf earlier this year after the private school missed a final payment. At a public sale in April the school district was the only bidder, so it retained ownership. The district submitted a bid in order to protect its investment.

Light Valley Waldorf has redemption rights, which give it first chance at buying the property back, until October. However, a Waldorf attorney has said the group isn't interest in buying the building back.

1993, Cascade Christian High School finalizes the purchase of the rapidly deteriorating Old Jacksonville School. They immediately commence on an extensive, 12-year renovation of the Bighams Knoll buildings. The buildings had set empty for two years prior to their purchase.

Beyond the 1960 removal of the bell tower, the single greatest modification to the main building is the installation of double-paned vinyl window, replacing the original wood sash. While this surely has some benefit in terms of energy efficiency, installation of white vinyl sash is not consistent with typical rehabilitation practice. Windows in the basement of the main structure, as well as most in the remaining historic buildings, appear to be generally original. Other modifications in the main building, including fire sprinklers in the basement level, improved fire/life/safety egress (via exterior stairwells); plumbing, electrical and telecommunications updates have been generally undertaken in simple and inexpensive fashion with little attention to aesthetic impact. These systems are functional if not particularly sensitive to the building's historic character or design. Most will require replacement during any quality rehab project. Major impact to character dates from the 1960s/public school era when the central stairwell lobby was altered by the construction of fire doors per code, changes that were magnified by the construction of inserted office spaces that reduce the "grand" entry area.

Exteriors are well maintained with little obvious damage. Extensive grounds and large paved parking areas provide for a variety of uses and the potential for future expansion. Mature plantings compliment the nature of the site, with the main historic structure elevated above Jacksonville's downtown and so visible from most viewpoints around the city to one degree or another. In short, the Old Jacksonville School is in relatively good condition given its history and is clearly in better condition than it was in 1993. The buildings remain occupied and are suitable for educational uses.

That said, additional evaluation would certainly identify the need for significant system and structural upgrades to improve energy efficiency, seismic performance, ADA accessibility and other code issues that will be required by any change in use. These are all typical and entirely expected elements during any comprehensive rehabilitation program.

(Observations by George Kramer, Historic Consultant, November 2005)

In 1995 a 1700 square foot concrete block duplex classroom structure was built on

the north side of the gymnasium.

November 18, 2005 Jacksonville given chance to buy school

Cascade Christian asking price delivered

Mail Tribune Nov. 27, 2005

After years of rumor and months of meetings, representatives of Cascade Christian High School confirmed they presented the city with an asking price for their seven-acre property this week.

"There is a number on the table" said Superintendent Ray Johnson, after declining to name the price. "We've asked them to give us an answer by Dec. 7."

March, 2006 Cascade Christian High School plans to break ground for their new Medford Campus. A \$6m project.

September 2007 Cascade High plans to occupy their new Medford campus, leaving Bighams Knoll after 14 years.

March 2007

ASHLANDS BUY CASCADE!

"The Old School is my mission," says Brooke Ashland, gazing out her living room window at the Cascade Christian campus. "I've been looking at that school for 20 years, and I'd like it to stay there so I can look at it for another 20 years."

Brooke will have her wish now that the Cascade Christian Board and the FBC Ministries Board have approved the sale of the 7.57 acre campus to Brooke and Mel Ashland. The Ashlands plan to make Jacksonville and the Old School building the headquarters for their two firms, Cutler Investment Group, LLC and Ashland Partners and Co. LLP. (**See related article, page 9.**) Cascade will defer its \$1.85 million Measure 37 Claim against the City of Jacksonville until closing, and the

Ashlands have no desire to pursue one.

“I’ve always liked the school,” Brooke emphasizes. “I have always thought it was a fantastic property. They used to have tennis courts where they put in the parking lots. I’d take my kids there to practice. I sent my daughter Hilary there when it was the Waldorf School.”

The Ashlands plan to work with historians on their adaptive reuse plan for the facility. “We want to work with people who are experts in this field. We want input from the community, from people who know the history, know the environment. We’ve already talked to some people with old yearbooks and pictures. We’d love to put some of these images on the walls.”

Ashland Partners made a “trial run” in the facility last August, renting the space for a week for their annual employee training conference. “Our employees loved it,” says Mel..

The large classroom spaces fit in with the Ashland Partners’ plans. “Everyone can have a locker, although we might modify them so they’re ‘double-wide.’ Our employees can come to work in the morning and sit at any desk. Right now we move people from their cubicles every four to five months. We try to get them out of a ‘my little corner of the world’ mentality.”

The gym is conceived as a multi-purpose space. “We only need it for training three weeks a year in January and August, so we would like to see it available for community use. We would like to see someone running events there. It will be set up with top of the line audio-visual equipment.

“The gym could be used as a large group room and the annex classrooms could be break out rooms. It would be perfect for executive retreats. The types of people who would be coming to Jacksonville would help the whole community.”

While school cafeterias are not always the source of fond memories, Brooke loves the one at the Old School. “The cafeteria is great! Food is such a part of our culture and

nutrition is so important. We want to use it to have lunch available to our employees. Whatever is left over, they can take home at the end of the day. That's a high value service with today's busy lifestyles."

Other plans include rebuilding the bell tower, turning the old music room into a traditional German restaurant, and creating space for child care. "We have so many young people working for us, as well as moving into the community, we'd like to see the north side classrooms possibly turned into an early childhood education center.

"The site itself needs trails and plantings. It's been 100 years since anyone planted a tree or a flower there. What's still there needs maintenance. We want to keep the ball fields and even add a small amphitheater. Part of the field might be turned into a community garden. We would also like to work with the city to develop an active park at the corner of Hueners and E streets, perhaps adding a pavilion, possibly some barbecue grills, and public bathrooms."

Brooke acknowledges that the project will be a handful, but laughs "I've been looking for a non-traditional environment for our headquarters for a long time. Our move to Jacksonville will enable us to compete in a 21st Century global economy."

She is emphatic about one thing, however. "The Old School should be the gem on the hill. What Jacksonville must hold on to is its history—that's the number one thing. It should keep the integrity of its history intact."

Part of Brooke Ashland's' motivation is to have more of a focus locally. "I've lived in the community for 20 years," Brooke states. "Sons Matthew and Erich (Patten) grew up here. Both were student body presidents at Jacksonville Elementary. Today, both serve as the investment professionals of the firm. Matthew and his family recently relocated back to Jacksonville after living for seven years in Shanghai. Although we have clients everywhere, we're moving Cutler Investment Group's headquarters here. We're doing community outreach through our 'Lunch and Learn' series. We hope the people of Jacksonville can benefit from our experiences."

She continues, "When we're traveling, people will talk about where they're going for

the weekend—to the mountains, to their cabin, etc. I say, we’re going home. It’s where we like to be. It’s an art show every time you look out the window. And from here we can see the Old School.”

March 2007

INVESTING IN JACKSONVILLE

In purchasing the Cascade Christian High School campus to house their corporate headquarters, Brooke and Mel Ashland are making a major investment in Jacksonville.

But after all, they are in the investment industry. Brooke is co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Cutler Investment Group, LLC. Mel is founder and partner in Ashland Partners, LLP, a firm that audits investment managers.

The couple met when Mel was a trustee for the Kern County Public Employee Retirement System in California, and Cutler Investment Group was one of their money managers. “We started arguing with each other and fell in love,” Brooke acknowledges. They have now been married for sixteen years.

Begun in Los Angeles in 1977, Cutler Investment Group relocated to Medford in 1984. Brooke had discovered the area when she visited Southern Oregon University with a group of friends from UCLA, her alma mater, during spring break in 1974. “Our family had been looking for a summer place, and the area was great for kids. Then I thought, ‘well, if it’s good for kids during the summer, what’s wrong with year round?’” They packed up the firm and all the employees and moved to Medford.

The Cutler Investment Group offers high quality, conservative stock investment strategies for both individuals and pension plans. They are also the only Mutual Fund Advisor based in Southern Oregon. Anticipating the purchase of the Old School property, Cutler moved to Jacksonville last fall as a way of introducing the organization to the community. “I guess the move brought us good luck!” Brooke states.

When Mel moved to the area in 1991, he was tired of public accounting. He had worked in Arthur Anderson's audit division from 1969 to 1975, and then founded Ashland and Richardson, CPAs in 1975.

That same year (1991), the money management industry took a step towards self-regulation, establishing the Association for Investment Management Research (AIMR) - Performance Presentation Standards. These ethical standards were to be used for creating performance presentations that ensured fair representation and full disclosure of investment performance results. Prior to their establishment, money managers could pick and choose their performance yardsticks, often leaving investors comparing apples and oranges.

Mel understood the need for presentation standards because he had been a pension fund trustee. Brooke, as an investment manager, knew the operations end and how to implement the Standards. In 1992 Mel and Brooke started Ashland Partners out of a desk in their basement. Ashland Partners became the first CPA firm in the country to offer investment performance verification.

"She made me make eight to ten cold calls a day," Mel recalls. "This was before Outlook and all the computer tracking programs. So someone would call me back and say 'this is George,' and I would scramble to find the piece of paper that says George who!"

"We went and created the industry if you will," Brooke adds. "We went to the large pension funds and said 'before you fund an investment manager, see if they are compliant with the AIMR Standards.' It was a marriage waiting to happen."

Now Ashland Partners has offices in Medford, Jersey City, Boston, and Shanghai, and audits over 475 money managers worldwide.

"Ashland Partners is in Shanghai because I helped Brooke with Cutler's Asian Fund and realized we needed a presence there," Mel explains. "Investment management—and thus auditing investment firms—are now global industries. Our presence in Shanghai makes us 24/7."

Cutler Investment Group created its Asian division over ten years ago to provide investment opportunities in China. “Ten or 11 years ago, the general population didn’t understand how fast American jobs were going overseas,” Brooke points out. “If American manufacturers are going to maintain global competitiveness, they have to find new markets to sell their products and services.”

She continues, “General Motors, for example, is not a manufacturer; they are an assembler. The manufacturing is done by smaller companies supplying products to them. Rather than have GM source from China, the premise was to take their U.S. manufacturers and teach them how to do business in China, so it wasn’t simply a labor arbitrage.”

Mel observes, “There’s an emergency situation in the U.S.—every industry is short of talented workers. We have an older generation that has business skills but lacks computer skills. The younger generation is competent in computer skills but lacking in business skills.”

One of Mel’s partners, Toby Cochran, sits on a business advisory council at SOU. “The Business Department there asked the council ‘what should our students look like?’ Toby’s response to the Council was ‘we can hire all the skills your kids have for 1/6 the price in China. What we need here in the States are students that can walk and talk and don’t have tattoos or holes in their bodies.’”

The Ashlands’ solution is to take young professionals and train them. “Every year Ashland Partners holds an August training session. We conducted a Mr. and Ms. Manners course at the Jacksonville Inn. Their general manager, Platon Mantheakis, was delighted to demonstrate proper etiquette to our group. Part of our training is such personal skills—good manners, business manners, appropriate dressing, talking, health and fitness, a balanced lifestyle,” Mel explains. “That’s the direction the workforce is going. That’s why we want the Old School campus.”

Brooke points out, “The school is a positive environment for the personality of today’s workforce. Most of the employees we’re going to hire are not going to take the

traditional path of sitting in a cubical and waiting 20 years for a corner office. Good workforce skills are very portable. Today's employees who are in demand want a flexible environment. Many have young families, and they want time to go to a kid's ball game or attend their play."

"We're trying to make enough opportunities for them to stay with us," Mel continues. "In fact, the turnover in both our companies is phenomenally low."

Brooke and Mel plan to move both Cutler Investment Group and Ashland Partners to the Old School. "We're looking at 21st Century adaptive reuse," Brooke says, "but we would like the school to look as much as possible like it did in 1906. That's possible because our businesses are really learning environments—study and work are intertwined. So the fact that it's a school is a plus—it's the learning environment our employees need."