

2011

STORIES FROM MEET THE PIONEERS

Living History Tours presented in Jacksonville, Oregon's Pioneer Cemetery.

2011 – Our Sixth Year

Individual Stories

[Jason and Alpha McDowell Hartman](#)

[Samuel R. and Melissa Rogers Taylor](#)

[James Carr Whipp and Florence Ella Shipley Whipp](#)

[Thomas and Elizabeth J. Cooper Wright](#)

Narratives

[Southern Oregon's Civil War – 150th Anniversary of the Civil War April 12, 2011](#)

[The Smallpox Epidemic – The Townsfolk](#)

[The Smallpox Epidemic – The Caregivers](#)

MEET THE PIONEERS

2011



Character

Elizabeth Arnold
Ms. Bilger
Father Blanchett
Ms. Butler
Captain George M.
Mary Ellen Collins
Sister Mary Francis
Louis Gentner
Alpha Hartman
Jason Hartman

Player

Anne Peugh
Constance Jesser
Gary Miller
Carolyn Kingsnorth
Joseph Jones
Lynn Ransford
Vivienne Grant
Larry Smith
Mary Ann Carlson
Steve Carlson

Character

Dr. Overbeck
Mr. Sneed
Melissa Taylor
Samuel R. Taylor
Florence Ella Whipp
James Carr Whipp
Elizabeth Wright
Thomas Wright

Player

Robert Hight
Terry Erdmann
Peggy Peffley
Doug Hanson
Gail Nicholson
Brian Nicholson
Ann Wilton
Steve Casaleggio

[\(Return\)](#)

Jason (Jace) Hartman and Alpha McDowell Hartman

Jason was born on August 5, 1868, in Edgerton, Ohio and came west from Eastern Ohio where he worked in the oil fields building oil derricks. Alpha was born in Etna, California on April 17, 1869.

Alpha's father, Samuel McDowell, left her mother and the family when she was very young. Her mother remarried, but unfortunately that marriage didn't work out either. Alpha and her mother, Artheisa, eventually moved to the Rogue Valley where Alpha became a schoolteacher. She was very frugal with her earnings as a teacher. Perhaps not having much growing up made her that much more cautious with money and saving it for a rainy day.

Jason, who had recently arrived in the Rogue Valley, put his building skills to work building barns. He met Alpha and they were married in 1898. Alpha had saved up enough money to purchase eighty acres in the Big Sticky area near the base of Roxy Ann and they began to raise a family. They would have four children, a daughter Anne (Ellen) and three sons, William Wesley, Lyal and Homer. Ellen died on December 31, 1924, from diabetes at the age of twenty-five.

Hartman became Jackson County's first official bridge builder taking that position early in the 1900's. Until his death in 1936 he built nearly every bridge in the county and most of them made of wood, and many were covered. Alpha's boys were all robust and worked with their father from a young age helping build bridges and barns.

In 1910, during the orchard boom, Alpha was able to sell her eighty acres to a man from Chicago who had big plans to make a lot of money growing pears. She took part of the money from the sale and purchased one of the original brick homes in Jacksonville and some surrounding land. The home was built in 1861 by attorney, Benjamin Franklin Dowell. The home, most often referred to as the BF Dowell House, still stands on 5th Street.

In 1917 Jason and two of his sons, Wes who was sixteen, and Lyle who was fourteen at the time, built the McKee Covered Bridge over the Applegate River. The covered bridges not only protected the deck from the weather but also helped to extend the lifetime of the bridge.

Jason liked to say that if you wanted one word to describe Alpha it would be "frugal" but right behind that would be "generous." He would tell the story of a time Alpha had been eyeing some new bowls that she was thinking about treating herself to, but she knew that their old friend, Charlie Blitch needed false teeth. Alpha used the money to buy Charlie's new teeth saying Charlie needed teeth more than I needed those bowls!

Alpha would share her tale of all the time she spent in front of the stove cooking for her husband and three big boys. She continued to use the wood stove even after her sons replaced it with an electric stove. One day while cooking, the floor gave way and her screams brought the boys running to find her with one leg stuck in the floor boards.

Things got a little rough during the depression, but the family managed to make ends meet, and Jason and the boys were able to build some bridges. Jason started to have serious problems with his knees and ended up using canes for the last couple years of his life. Alpha and Jason drifted apart, and he eventually moved out of the house and lived in a tiny old house near the Petards. He died there of heart failure on February 5, 1936, at the age of sixty-eight.

Alpha continued to live in her home on 5th Street in Jacksonville with her sons until she passed on July 27, 1939, at the age of seventy.

Their sons, Wes and Lyal, followed their father in what became the family business. Wes worked building bridges, the only job he ever had, for forty-four years. His brother Lyle set a County employment record in 1968 when he retired as bridge construction foreman after fifty years.

Jason and Alpha Hartman are buried in the I.O.O.F. Section of the Jacksonville Cemetery in Block 534, Plots 1 and 3.

[\(Return\)](#)

Samuel R. Taylor and Melissa Rogers Taylor

Samuel, who was of Scotch-Irish ancestry, was born on February 16, 1828, in Mt. Carmel, Illinois. He spent his early life on the Wabash and Mississippi Rivers where his father operated a river barge. At the age of twenty-three, and caught with the spirit of adventure, he joined an emigrant wagon train in Kansas City in the spring of 1851 and headed west. Traveling by foot across the Continent he arrived in Portland in the fall of that year. Sam later described early Portland as a city of few cabins, many tents and more tree stumps than people.

Hearing that gold had been discovered in Jacksonville, Sam headed south and arrived in Jacksonville in the spring of 1852. He mined in the area for several years trying to strike it rich. Sam served two terms as deputy sheriff and also drove a stagecoach on the run between Jacksonville and Waldo in Josephine County.

On January 18, 1872, Samuel married Melissa Rogers out in the Applegate. Reverend J.H. Skidmore of the Jacksonville Methodist Church performed their marriage ceremony. The groom was forty-three and his bride was twenty-two. Melissa was born on March 22, 1849, in Virgal, Kane County, Illinois and came west with her uncle and Rial Benedict and his family in 1853. The Taylors would have four children, three sons and a daughter. Their first born, a son named Edward Everett Taylor, died on August 10, 1874, at the age of fifteen months.

In 1876 Samuel and Melissa left their Applegate home and moved to Steamboat, Jackson County, Oregon where Sam mined and for a time, worked as Superintendent of the celebrated Steamboat Mine. In 1878 they moved back to Jacksonville where Sam started a freight line that operated out of Jacksonville to a number of adjoining communities. Their second son Hayes Benjamin was born on December 13, 1878, followed by daughter Lillian Melissa, born on June 28, 1882, and finally a son Marvel Merritt, born on October 17, 1884.

In 1890 Melissa opened a hotel in Jacksonville called the "Taylor House." It was the largest in town at the time and was located on the southeast corner of California and 4th Street. Sam helped Melissa with the hotel until his passing in 1908.

The Taylor family received the sad news that son Hayes Benjamin Taylor was killed in action on March 25, 1899, at the Battle of Malabon in the Philippines during the Spanish American War. His remains were returned to his family and Jacksonville for burial in the cemetery on February 21, 1900.

Samuel R. Taylor passed away on May 2, 1908, at the age of eighty. One of his favorite stories to share with folks was about the plug of Star Brand tobacco he bought before he left Kansas City for fifty cents. Not using tobacco, himself, he carried that plug of tobacco all the way to Oregon where he sold it for a dollar-fifty. His only regret was that he didn't buy more!

Following Sam's death, Melissa continued to operate the hotel until 1910 and remained in the family home on South 5th Street in Jacksonville. The hotel was purchased by the Abbott family, was remodeled and opened under the name of the Abbott House. The family home still stands today on 5th Street across from the park.

Melissa Rogers Taylor died on February 22, 1932, in Oakland, California at the age of eighty-two. Her daughter Lillian and son Marvel survived her.

Samuel and Melissa Taylor are both buried in the City Section of the Jacksonville Cemetery in Block 208, Plots 11 and 12.

[\(Return\)](#)

James Carr Whipp and Florence Ella Hoffman Shipley Whipp

James was born in 1845 in Yorkshire, England. It was there that he apprenticed as a stonemason, a trade that would later bring him much success. He then joined the Royal Navy and traveled the world and witnessed much adventure before jumping ship in New York.

He joined the 1st U.S. Cavalry in 1873 and, after sailing around Cape Horn, he arrived in Vancouver, Washington and Fort Walla Walla. Following his discharge, Whipp went back into the stonemason business in Portland, Oregon, a growing city that was in need of skilled stonemasons. In Portland he worked on a number of its early buildings such as The Oregonian newspaper building and the Portland Hotel. He also worked on the Tillamook Lighthouse.

In 1883 James arrived in Jacksonville, Oregon to do stonework on the Jackson County Courthouse, then under construction in Jacksonville. He met and married Florence Ella Shipley the following year. Three children would be born to them, two daughters and a son.

Florence was born in Attica, Indiana in 1847 and came across the plains with her parents and five sisters in 1853. In 1867 she married Thomas Shipley who later became a County Judge. Thomas died on August 16, 1871, from pneumonia. He was just thirty years old. While a young widow, Florence became interested in philosophical writing, eventually presenting one of her essays at the annual Teachers' Institute.

Shortly after their marriage Whipp started his new business venture, the Jacksonville Marble Works which was located on the corner of Oregon and California Streets. In an age when death was commonplace and a weekly trip to the cemetery was an obligation, memorial stones were virtual necessities. Those who could afford them purchased marble engraved with eloquent verses and lavish embellishments. Whipp was able to hire expert sculptors and marble workers, and their skills in carving produced some of the most beautiful and sought after monuments. Whipp had a thriving business as was noted in the Oregon Sentinel of September 4, 1886: "Whipp is doing a rushing business. He has just returned from Josephine County where he set up a large number of tombstones. In Jacksonville he is putting up a handsome enclosure of C.C. Beekman."

Sadly, one of his beautiful creations was for his own daughter Caroline, who died on July 4, 1886. She was only three months and seven days old and was buried in the Hoffman family block in the City Section of the Jacksonville Cemetery. The small, ornately carved marble stone has carved sides in the form of a cradle commonly called a "French cradle design."

In 1903 James closed the marble works and, with his family, moved from Southern Oregon, eventually ending up in Fallon, Nevada. There in 1905 he became a rancher and farmer on eight acres of land and once again, he was successful.

James Carr Whipp died in 1927 at the age of eighty-two. Florence Ella Hoffman Shipley Whipp died in 1929, also at the age of eighty-two. Both are buried in the Churchill County Cemetery in Nevada. A sad ending to their story is that, despite all the wonderful and beautiful pieces that Mr. Whipp and his Marble Works produced, his grave and that of Florence, is marked with a simple flat marker with just their names and year of birth and death.

His works of art, many of them signed, can be found all over Southern Oregon, mostly in our larger and older Pioneer Cemeteries such as Jacksonville, as well the Eastwood IOOF in Medford, but also on original homesteads of some of our earlier Pioneers.

One of his more well-known pieces is the sculptured kneeling child that Dr. James Robinson purchased as a memorial for his two children, Willie and Leah who died from diphtheria in 1890.

[\(Return\)](#)

Thomas Wright and Elizabeth Jane Cooper Wright

Thomas was born on October 22, 1822, in Madison County, Kentucky. At the age of two his family relocated to Howard County, Missouri where he grew up.

In the spring of 1846, the State of Missouri was called upon by the U.S. Government for troops to serve for one year in the service of their country to fight in the war against Mexico. Thomas and his older brother Nicholas B. Wright were among the first to volunteer. They joined Company G of the 1st Regiment of the Missouri Mounted Volunteers commanded by Colonel A. W. Doniphan. They were a part of the Army of the West whose objective was to capture New Mexico and California. The two groups marched to New Mexico and captured Santa Fe the Capital, on August 17, 1846, without firing a shot. Meanwhile Commodore Shubrick and Colonel Fremont and their troops captured California. With no need for additional troops in New Mexico, the Regiment of Volunteers was ordered down into Old Mexico. They arrived at Saltillo, Mexico in May of 1847. With the end of their one year of service approaching, the Regiment was sent by ship to New Orleans where they were mustered out of service and returned to their homes.

In 1851, Thomas crossed the plains to California, first mining in the Marysville area then moving on to Yreka. The following year he came up to the Rogue River Valley where he mined and started a mule packing business. He carried provisions from Eureka and Crescent City to Jacksonville for the miners and other residents of the area. On one such trip during the winter, fast melting snow caused the Rogue River to rise so fast that the mules drowned in the pasture and Thomas and some other packers had to climb trees to save themselves. Some local Indians, seeing and hearing of their dilemma, quickly felled a tree and made a canoe and rescued each of the men.

Thomas was active during the Indian Wars of 1855-1856 but did not join any formal or volunteer military company.

On May 28, 1863, Thomas was married to Elizabeth Jane Cooper in the Applegate by Reverend Riddle. Thomas was forty years old, and his young bride was just sixteen. Her father signed a consent form certifying that his daughter was over fifteen years of age. Four children would be born to them, a son William, and daughters Laura, Mary, and Margaret (Maggie). Laura died at the age of six and Maggie died at the age of three.

Elizabeth Jane Cooper was born on September 9, 1846, in McDonald County, Missouri. In 1852 she came across the plains with her family when she was six years of age. Her Grandmother, an aunt and two cousins died on the trip from cholera. Years later Elizabeth would recall stories of her crossing the plains on a trip that took six months. She remembered great herds of buffalo crossing the prairies and how the wagons would have to stop to let them pass, sometimes delaying them for an hour or two. She recalled how her father would take a small bite of a biscuit and then divide the rest with his three children when provisions got low. The family settled on the Santiam River the first winter where her father worked in a saw mill. They then moved to the Willamette Valley just outside of Eugene. Later on, they settled in Butte Creek

where they operated a general store. Eventually the Cooper family moved to the Upper Applegate Valley where Elizabeth would meet Thomas Wright.

In 1866, Thomas and Elizabeth purchased a farm in the Willow Springs area where they would live out their lives. Here Thomas farmed and raised stock. Thomas was a member of the Grange Association. In 1870 he was elected Jackson County Commissioner and served for two years. In 1874 Thomas was elected to the lower branch of the Oregon Legislature.

On the evening of August 13, 1901, after finishing his chores, Thomas came into the house complaining that he didn't feel well and was seized with a sudden stroke and died within minutes. He was seventy-eight years old.

Elizabeth died on September 9, 1931, at the age of eighty-five.

After Thomas died, his widow Elizabeth received a monthly pension check for his service in 1846-1847 in the Mexican War. The Congressional Act on January 29, 1887, provided pension payments for military widows. Elizabeth received eight dollars a month which was later increased to twenty dollars in December of 1916, and to thirty dollars on May 1, 1920, and then to fifty dollars beginning on September 4, 1926.

Thomas Wright and Elizabeth Jane Cooper Wright are buried in the City Section of the Jacksonville Cemetery in Block 209, Plots one and two.

[\(Return\)](#)

Narrative – Southern Oregon’s Civil War

Some people are surprised to learn how our nation’s Civil War impacted the residents of Southern Oregon, way out there in the far west. Despite the vast distance between the battle fields and the state of Oregon, the Civil War was very much on everyone’s mind. People were anxious to learn the latest news from back east and would gather daily to discuss the war and the latest battles. In Jacksonville folks would gather around the town pump to talk or argue the news, both new and old, about how the war was going.

When gold was first discovered in California in 1848 and then later in Jacksonville in 1852, hundreds upon hundreds of men left their homes and headed west to strike it rich. They came from all over the United States, including both northern and southern states, as well as Europe and Asia. The offer of free land, the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850, to spur American settlement of the Oregon Territory, brought another group of Pioneers westward, again from all over the country. With the start of the Civil War in 1861, where you were born and lived before coming west, in most cases, predetermined where your allegiance stood, with the Union or the Confederacy.

Jackson County contained one of the largest concentrations of Oregon’s Southern sympathizers, and the majority of these lived in Jacksonville. Some up in the northern part of Oregon referred to Southern Oregon as “Little Dixie.” While a number of Oregonians went east to fight alongside the Union or Confederate armies, the majority remained in the area. Those who stayed joined the 1st Oregon Cavalry or the 1st Oregon Infantry or volunteered with the local Militia, the Mountain Rangers, who were a part of the Oregon Militia. They came primarily from towns like Ashland, Talent and Phoenix who for the most part supported the Union. They were active in Oregon, mainly keeping the roads and mining camps safe from Indian attacks. The war divided neighbor against neighbor and town against town.

The only known Civil War casualty in Southern Oregon occurred in 1862 at Camp Baker in Phoenix. Soldiers at the camp were reportedly celebrating a rumored Union victory and started firing canons in salutation. One round misfired into a group of soldiers, injuring several of them. Soldier John Linly eventually died of his wounds. As it turned out, the rumored victory was not a victory at all.

One young Jacksonville resident who went east to fight with the Union Army was James W. Lingenfelter. James was born in Fonda, Montgomery County, New York and after graduation from New York University with a law degree he came west to start a law practice in Jacksonville. James was admitted to the Bar in the State of Oregon on June 26, 1860. After the fall of Fort Sumter, James enlisted in the Army on May 24, 1861, at the rank of Captain. He joined Oregon Senator Edward Dickson Baker when Baker formed the 1st California Regiment at the start of the Civil War, later re-designated the 71st Pennsylvania Infantry. Four months later, on September 21, 1861, while serving in the defense of Washington, D.C, Captain Lingenfelter was killed while on duty at Chain Bridge in Virginia. He was shot in the head by a Confederate sniper while on picket (guard) duty with his men. James was a very promising attorney and a well-

respected political orator in Oregon. Captain Lingenfelter was only twenty-four years old and had the unfortunate honor of being the first Oregonian to die in the Civil War.

Slavery of course was a major topic and point of much debate and arguments with regard to the ongoing Civil War. And while most residents agreed that they did not want to see slavery spread into Oregon, a free state at the time, many felt that those states that were already considered to be slave states should be allowed to continue as such. At the same time Oregon was not open to welcoming Negros into the state. The Oregon Territory had Exclusion Laws dating back to 1848 making it unlawful for "any Negro or Mulatto" to reside in the Oregon Territory. Prior to this the "Lash Law" which existed from the early 1800's until 1844, allowed whippings of Negros who did not leave the Territory. This was replaced with forced labor. While the Exclusion laws were repealed and replaced over the next several years, they were written in the State Constitution when Oregon became a state in 1859, the only Free State admitted to the Union with such laws. In 1862 Oregon wrote the law to apply to free Negroes over eighteen, Chinese, Hawaiians and Mulattos requiring that they leave the state unless they pay an annual five-dollar tax. If they could not pay it, then they would have to work on maintaining Oregon's roads. At the time, there were those who questioned just how free the state of Oregon was.

One cause that Jacksonville residents and most Oregon residents could and did rally behind was supporting the work of the Sanitary Commission. The Commission inspected camps for the prevention of disease, made inquiries about diet and clothing, and provided care and treatment of the wounded, from both sides. The Commission also established directories at general hospitals so mothers and wives could locate loved ones. They also established soldiers' homes for the wounded. Just as important they raised money and pledges of support for the Sanitary Commission and its work. Supplies such as chloroform, brandy and other painkillers, tins of condensed milk and beef-stock, bandages, surgeon's silk, food and clothing would be collected and distributed. The Sanitary Commission did what the government could not do and was not prepared to do as they had no concept of the extent of the injuries or deaths that would result from this awful war. The state of Oregon was one of the major contributors to the Commission, even exceeding most eastern states. The founding of the Commission started with a meeting of women in New York on April 25, 1861 and grew into the Women's Central Association of Relief. With the help of Dr. Henry W. Bellows, pastor of All Souls Unitarian Church in New York, who advised the women to find out first what the Government would and could do, and then to attempt to do only those things which the general Government felt itself unable to do. Bellows, accompanied by several other gentlemen traveled to Washington and despite a less than warm reception from various government departments, finally received the support of the acting Surgeon-General. He suggested the appointment of "a commission of inquiry and advice in respect to the sanitary interest of the United States forces," to act with the medical bureau.

On May 23, 1861, it was suggested that an unpaid commission be appointed for the following purposes: "To inquire into the recruiting service in the various States and by advice to bring them to a common standard; second, to inquire into the subjects of diet, clothing, cooks, camping grounds, in fact everything connected with the prevention of disease among volunteer soldiers not accustomed to the rigid regulations of the regular troops; and third, to discover a method by which private and unofficial interest and money might supplement the appropriations of the Government."

This plan was approved on June 9, 1861, signed by the President on June 13, and became part of Federal Legislation on June 18, 1861. The Sanitary Commission raised an estimated \$25 million in Civil War era revenue (assuming 1865 dollars, \$399.67 million in 2018) and in-kind contributions to support the cause and enlisted thousands of volunteers.

The work of the Sanitary Commission and others such as the United States Christian Commission was invaluable during the Civil War. In the South while no well-organized group such as the Sanitary Commission existed, there were a number of women's aid societies. In every town that the soldiers passed through, women were always ready to feed the hungry and nurse the sick. There were a few organized convalescent homes, and families would take convalescent soldiers into their private homes to recover.

[\(Return\)](#)

Narrative – The Smallpox Epidemic – The Townsfolk

In late fall of 1868, a case of what was declared as “chicken pox” by the local doctors, was later determined to actually be smallpox of the confluent and most malignant type. While efforts were made to repair the error of the doctors, it was too late and by early January 1869, a full-blown epidemic raged through the town of Jacksonville.

The town was quarantined, and all school, religious, and other public gatherings were discontinued. Shops closed, and people kept off the streets and failed to answer calls at their door out of fear of catching the dreaded disease. Yellow cloth “flags” were hung on homes and other buildings the disease had already called upon, warning others to stay clear. Pine Pitch was burnt in the streets causing a layer of smoke to hang over the town day and night producing a ruddy light that gave an eerie glow over the streets. The belief at the time was that the burning Pine Pitch would help to purify the air. In fact, it served no purpose as it did not provide any protection from catching the disease or help to eradicate it, but it did actually interfere with breathing fresh air.

To help prevent the spread of smallpox and provide care for the ill and dying, Pest (Pestilence) Houses were established south of town and outside the corporation limits. As more and more cases were reported, panic and fear spread among the residents of Jacksonville, as well as the surrounding areas.

The dead were taken to the cemetery by night and buried. No family, no mourners and no service other than a short prayer.

Those towns surrounding Jacksonville would stop persons traveling by horse, stagecoach or on foot and if they mentioned being anywhere near Jacksonville they would be turned back or placed in quarantine at gunpoint.

For two months the disease ran its course. By the end of the first week in February 1869, fifty-eight cases of smallpox had occurred in Jacksonville. The individuals who survived were primarily those who had been vaccinated. The number of deaths exceeded forty, which in a small community, left a perceptible vacuum.

[\(Return\)](#)

Narrative – The Smallpox Epidemic – The Caregivers

The winter of 1868 was reportedly one of the sickliest ones known to have hit the Rogue River Valley in many years. Coughs and pneumonia were prevalent, and the croup was unusually fatal among children. Then in December rumors of smallpox surfaced which were at first denied, but later confirmed after having been mistaken for "Chicken Pox" by local physicians. Now with confirmation of smallpox in Jacksonville the town leaders were prompt to place the town under quarantine. The annual Christmas tree for the children was canceled. City officials ordered that schools, church gatherings and public meetings be discontinued. This was an attempt to stop the spread of this fast moving and dangerous disease which by early 1869 had become an epidemic.

In December 1868 Dr. Franklin Grube, an honor graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, wrote the following letter to the townspeople for publication:

"Dear Editor:

It has been disputed for several weeks whether or not smallpox is in Jacksonville. Until a few days ago I have uniformly answered "no" to that question, but the eruptive disease which first appeared in town was a far different type from any smallpox which I have seen. Within a few days, however, I have seen a case with the usual sign of smallpox of a mild type. There is no cause for panic. The disease will prevail more or less over this valley. Let people pursue their usual avocations; avoid no places but the house where there is smallpox or variola. Avoid handling clothing of those who have been about the disease. Vaccinate all members of families who have not already been. Any person can do that with fresh virus and a clean instrument. Those who live near the infection should have chloride of lime or other disinfectants exposed on a plate or saucer in their houses. The disease is more malignant where cleanliness of person or premises is neglected. Physicians generally agree that medicine will not arrest the disease – nay, even that it will not control it or influence it considerably. A skillful nurse can do almost as much as a physician. For costiveness, a mild laxative, for fever, a cooling drink, for food, only what is light or easily digested, and but little of it is required. The patient should be kept in bed and avoid drafts of raw air or sudden changes of temperature. Some disinfectant should be exposed in the sick room and changed every few days. To prevent pitting, painting the face with collodion is the most effective remedy I have ever seen."

Dr. Grube vaccinated entire families and worked long hours to treat those who contracted the disease. Unfortunately, attendants of the first dying patients moved too freely through the community, and soon residents discovered that malignant smallpox surrounded them.

The Board of Health set up a "Pest House" at Kanaka Flats and a hospital was established on the edge of Jacksonville. The January 2, 1869, Oregon Sentinel described the Pest House as follows: "This institution was built by the town, outside the corporation limits, and a whole family afflicted with the smallpox removed to it. It is very comfortable, much more so than the house occupied by the afflicted family, and although the name is somewhat appalling, it is an excellent hospital rather than a pest house."

With the order to close the schools, the sisters of the Holy Names closed St. Mary's Academy at the end of the second term. Those students, who were boarding at the school, some twenty-four at the time, were all sent home to their families. Upon learning of the now spreading epidemic, and that the afflicted were not being properly tended to out of fear of contagion, the sisters immediately offered their help. At first their offer was kindly rejected by City leaders who were unwilling to expose the generous ladies of the Sisterhood to contagion until an imperative necessity required it, wrote David Linn, President of the Board of Health. However, as the number of cases of smallpox increased and spread, the decision to allow the sisters to help was gratefully accepted. Sisters Mary Francis and Mary Edward began their visits to the smallpox patients. Father Blanchet, a Catholic Priest had also volunteered his services as a nurse.

The sisters were not permitted to reenter the Convent or any other house except the plague-stricken, in the same clothes they wore while tending to the sick. In the evening when they returned to the convent for food or clothing, they were met at the door where those articles were given to them. The sisters then went to a little shed on the convent property where they changed their clothes and took some much-needed nourishment. The only food edible in the pestiferous houses was nuts, fruit, meat and cheese that quickly went bad in a few hours given the intense fever and noxious odor from the plague.

Dr. Overbeck and Dr. Chapin like all physicians worked frantically to help where they could. Father Blanchet and the sisters worked around the clock caring for the sick and dying. While they were admired for doing what was necessary, they were also shunned by those who came across them out of fear of catching the deadly disease. Anyone suspected of being around those affected with smallpox were threatened with physical harm if they did not move on.

In March 1869, and after two months' time, the smallpox epidemic subsided and the sisters were gratefully dismissed by the Board of Health and they returned to their convent. Following some much-needed rest they were recalled to Portland. Reverend Francis Xavier Blanchet returned to his Pastor duties with St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Jacksonville where he continued to serve until 1887. Dr. Andrew B. Overbeck, who had worked along Father Blanchet and the good sisters, collapsed from overwork and it took him several weeks to recover his strength. He recovered but died in 1872 at the age of forty-four from peritonitis.

[\(Return\)](#)