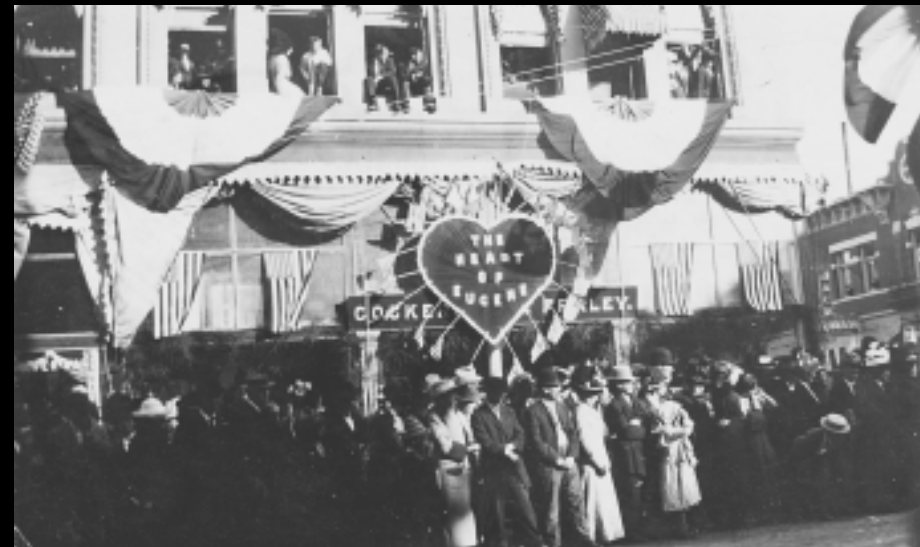




PART I The People



Movers and Shakers

It seemed a natural place to build a town. With the river on the north, and ringed by hills on its other three sides, the area was, Eugene Skinner is reputed to have said in 1846, “an ideal place for a home.”

He wasn't alone. Within a few years, other settlers arrived and registered their claims on the land. They built and traded and built some more. They promoted, speculated, and sometimes gambled outright. This was the center, they believed — the place in the county where transportation, industry, commerce, education, religion, and government all would meet.

They were right. In 1852, Skinner donated the first piece of land for a town. The following year, “Eugene City” was made the seat of Lane County. By 1858, there were over five hundred residents. Incorporation came in 1862, paving the way for the movers and shakers to build “Skinner’s Mudhole” into the commercial and cultural hub of the upper Willamette Valley.

But perhaps it wasn't all lofty dreams for those early town-builders. For some, the vision of the city's future focused literally on the street. “Some of our citizens are striving to have Eugene incorporated,” said the *State Republican* newspaper in 1860, “giving as their reasons that they wish to banish the common nuisance of hogs and groghshops from the town.”



Opposite page (clockwise from top left): Fairmount streetcar on Willamette, ca. 1909; Ed McClanahan at his boat landing on Eugene millrace, 1899; Columbus Day celebration at UO, 1892; Family and home outside Eugene; Thomas Condon and grandson, 1906; Oregon Electric Railway celebration, 1912; Millinery shop, ca. 1915; Exterior of S.H. Friendly store.

EUGENE SKINNER

Eugene's premier citizen would have to be the man for whom the town was named. Eugene Skinner (1809-1864) came in 1846 to the hill known today as Skinner Butte and built a cabin on level land just west of the rise. He left for the winter and returned the following spring with his wife, **Mary Cook Skinner**, and daughter, also named **Mary** — the first white women in Lane County. Another daughter, **Lenora**, was the first white child born in the county.

In 1860, Skinner sent a letter to his sister back east, recalling his early days in the Oregon country. “May 1847,” he wrote. “Moved my wife and Child Mary then 5 mo old, into our new home in the far off west, 45 miles to the first neighbor on the North 450 miles on the South, China Hong Kong or Peking on the west Missouri on the east.”

He then listed his possessions: three cows with calves, nine horses, six pigs, one hog, a dozen chicks, one cat, one dog, and forty-four cents cash. “And once I was compelled to leave my wife and little one alone whilst I went in Search of flour the nearest mill being 80 miles,” he wrote. “I was gone 6 nights and the Country full of Indians.”

That would all change soon enough. Skinner ran a ferry across the Willamette River, a store operated out of a portion of his cabin, and a post office named Skinner's was established in 1850, with the first settler as postmaster. The

name was changed to Eugene City in 1853, when Skinner and Charnel Mulligan donated land for the county seat.



By 1860, Skinner could tell his sister that his town had almost a thousand people, with one school, eight stores, three each of churches, blacksmiths, and wagon shops, two each of drug stores, hotels, saloons, printers, saddle makers, and cabinet shops, as well as a market, shoe shop, grist mill, saw mill, and a door and sash factory. “We have no aristocracy and no high style of living,” he wrote. “Still we enjoy life as well as those who roll in luxuries.”

Skinner was, of necessity, the first Eugenean. He was also the first Mason of Eugene Lodge #11, initiated in March 1856 — and the first member to die.

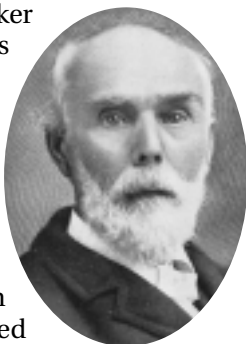
We have no aristocracy and no high style of living. Still we enjoy life as well as those who roll in luxuries.

Lower left: Looking north on Willamette Street, 1864. Top right: Eugene Skinner.

You gentlemen have carried away almost everything from the State House, and I am waiting for this stove to cool off so I can take it home with me.

JOHN WHITEAKER

John Whiteaker (1820-1902) was Oregon's first governor. He originally came west to California as one of the "Forty-niners" searching for gold. With his earnings from there he returned east, then brought his



family over the Oregon Trail in 1852 and settled in Lane County. Soon active in the Democratic party, he was elected to the Territorial Legislature in 1857, and then governor when Oregon was admitted to the Union in 1859. His nickname was "Honest John."

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Whiteaker's pro-slavery position alienated him from a number of Oregonians, and he was not nominated for a second term. But he didn't retire from politics. He went on to serve in the Oregon Legislature and Senate, and in 1878 was elected to the U.S. Congress. A year later, he cap-

tured nationwide attention with what would come to be known as "John Whiteaker's Ride."

On the night of March 7, 1879, Whiteaker was awakened in his Eugene home by an urgent message from Democratic congressional leaders in the nation's capital. He was needed immediately in Washington, they said, for his vote to assure election of their nominee for Speaker of the House. He took a train to Portland, a steamship to San Francisco, and then a special train from Oakland to Washington, D.C. He crossed the country in five days — the fastest train trip recorded to that date.

Ironically, it turned out his vote was not essential, as the Speaker had already been elected in a caucus the night before. "The country was safe," said the *New York Times* a short time later. "And everything went on just as though he had not spanned the continent in five days, five hours, and eleven minutes."

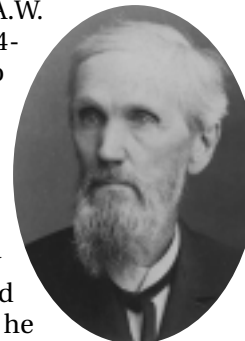
But irony was not unfamiliar to Honest John — according to Lane County pioneer son Cal Young, who related this anecdote of 1860s Oregon politics:

When the Legislature adjourned, the senators and representatives would carry away from the building nearly every piece of furniture that wasn't bolted down. One time, a senator came into a room to find the governor sitting very close to the heating stove. He asked why the governor was sitting there and why he didn't go home.

"You gentlemen have carried away almost everything from the State House," the governor replied. "And I am waiting for this stove to cool off so I can take it home with me."

A.W. PATTERSON

When Dr. A.W. Patterson (1814-1904) came to the Lane County region over the Oregon Trail in 1852, he found the citizens so healthy that they had no real need for a doctor. So he took up surveying, and in 1854 laid out the town of Eugene.



But that wasn't all. In the course of his life, Patterson also was an army surgeon, school teacher and superintendent, textbook writer, publisher, state senator, pioneering hop-grower, and chairman of the committee that recommended building the University of Oregon in Eugene.

In 1862 he began practicing medicine in Eugene, and continued doing so for over thirty years. Patients who needed constant attention in the early days were moved to Patterson's house, where they were cared for by his wife, **Amanda**, and family. His daughter, **Harriette**, recalled in later years that patients were kept "under constant surveillance." She wasn't sure if the deaths of three of the eight Patterson children were related to this practice.

In recognition of Patterson's contributions to education, the city of Eugene in 1901 dedicated the Patterson grade school at 13th and Alder streets in his name. It operated

for nearly thirty years, with the doctor's daughter, **Ida**, serving as principal for a time. The present-day Patterson School on Eugene's west side is named for her.

Patterson also saw to the education of the populace back east, writing a long description of early western Oregon for the *Family Journal and Visiter* of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1858. After describing the rivers, mountains, soils, crops, timber, game, grasses, minerals, natives, and agreeable life, he concluded his findings with a prophecy of the times to come. "Oregon bids fair to be a prosperous and populous country," he wrote. "It possesses the rudiments of wealth and prosperity; and probably the sun illumines the valleys of no healthier region. In its mountains slumbers untold mineral wealth, and in its fertile soil are the resources of the abundance which may be required to sustain the dense population, which is doubtless destined to seek its shores."

Oregon bids fair to be a prosperous and populous country. It possesses the rudiments of wealth and prosperity; and probably the sun illumines the valleys of no healthier region.

Left: John Whiteaker.
Right: A.W. Patterson.

THOMAS G. HENDRICKS

Tom Hendricks (1838-1919) had Oregon connections before he ever set foot in the territory. His grandfather was Elijah Bristow, who settled in Pleasant Hill and built the first house in Lane County. Hendricks came over the Oregon Trail with his family in 1848, when he was ten years old.



He began his business career as a clerk in his uncle's store, and eventually became the sole owner. "There is an account that the Molalla Indian chief, Moses, traded his furs at the Hendricks' store, then spent the night in the Hendricks' home, rolled in a blanket with his feet to the open fire," recalled his granddaughter, **Martha Goodrich**.

In 1883, Hendricks opened a bank with Stewart Eakin. Three years later, the Hendricks and Eakin Bank became the First National Bank of Eugene, with Hendricks as president — a position he retained for over thirty years. His civic services included, among many other things, terms as council member, mayor, and state senator.

Nearly all Eugene business leaders in the 1870s were involved in establishing the University of Oregon in the town, and Hendricks was a key player. During a particular funding crisis

when members of the Union University Association visited area farmers and collected cows, pigs and apples as donations, Hendricks found ways to convert these goods into cash.

Hendricks was also heavily committed to his home life. He had lost his first wife and an infant son — leaving him with a daughter, **Ida**, who would later marry businessman Frank Chambers. Hendricks remarried to **Martha Stewart**, whose family had come west in 1852. She bore him two more daughters: **Ada** and **Ruby**. They spent much time together as a family, taking picnics and long camping trips in the summer, said Martha Goodrich. "Grandpa gave us all the legacy of his passionate love of the out-of-doors."

He also left an outdoor legacy to the city. Hendricks Park in east Eugene was a combination gift and sale by Hendricks in 1906. "The original purpose envisioned a park kept as nearly in its natural state as commensurate with its best recreational use," wrote Goodrich. The park today is renowned for its rhododendron gardens, which explode into shades of pink, purple and red each spring.

The Molalla Indian Chief, Moses, spent the night in the Hendricks' home.



STEWART B. EAKIN

Stewart B. Eakin (1846-1912), founding partner of the Hendricks and Eakin Bank, started out working the fields. "He was, in the truest sense, the architect of his own fortune," said the *History of the Willamette Valley, Oregon* in 1927. "He advanced from a humble beginning to a place of large influence and great responsibility."

He was twenty years old when he came to Lane County, and spent his first year on the family farm. He moved on to clerking in stores, including a stint at F.B. Dunn's. When the Hendricks and Eakin Bank opened in 1883, Eakin served as cashier, holding that position for over fifteen years. He later became vice president, and remained in office until his death in 1912.

In 1874, he was nominated for sheriff of Lane County. Voters heavily favored the Democratic party at the time, and Eakin — the Republican candidate — won the election by a margin of one vote. It was the first political victory for a man who would go on to serve a number of years in the Oregon Legislature and the state senate — without ever losing an election.

Left: Thomas G. Hendricks.

Right: First National Bank of Eugene, ca. 1895. Stewart Eakin is behind counter at left.

SAM FRIENDLY

“I lead but never follow” was his slogan, and he lived it. He built a successful mercantile business, served on the Eugene City Council and a term as mayor, and was instrumental in bringing the



University of Oregon to Eugene. He was born Samson H. Freundlich, in New York City. But for fifty years, Eugeneans would know him as Sam Friendly (1840-1915).

He arrived in Eugene in 1865 and went to work at both a general store and the Wells Fargo office. Shortly thereafter, he and his brother-in-law had their own mercantile, where they not only sold dry goods and clothing to locals, but also shipped Lane County products — hops, wool and wheat — to other regions.

Store owners at the time filled their walls with merchandise and left a center aisle open so people could see the wares, recalled Daye Hulin, granddaughter of Lane County pioneer **Mahlon Harlow**. At the Friendly store on Willamette Street, she remembered round wooden stools placed on both sides of the counters. “They were a thoughtful accouterment,” she said. “The shopper could sit in comfort and the tired clerk could rest between customers.”

Well-liked throughout the town, Friendly was a hero at the university. Records show that during the earliest

days of construction, he bought the wheat that area farmers had donated to help finance the school building. He later served as a regent for fifteen years, and was widely known for his generosity toward students and enthusiastic support for athletic teams. When the first UO dormitory was built in 1893, it was named Friendly Hall.

Sam Friendly was also fond of the good life. He and his wife, **Mathilda** (1850-1921) decorated their house in Eugene with their name engraved in the transom glass above the front door. Friendly would stand with his thumbs tucked in his lapels and call for a carriage by saying in his thick German accent, “Please send me mine team.”

When he died, his funeral was attended by 1500 people at Villard Hall on the UO campus. EUGENE CITIZENS SORROWFUL OVER DEATH OF MR. FRIENDLY, the *Daily Guard* reported on its front page. ALL OREGON MOURNS LOSS OF NOTED CITIZEN, added the *Morning Register*. “Mr. Friendly was essentially a big man,” said UO President Prince Lucien Campbell. “His views were broad and he was willing to give much time to the good of the university or city.”

Today his name lives on, not only through Friendly Street in west Eugene, but also in the larger surrounding area — called the Friendly Neighborhood.

I lead but never follow.

LORD NELSON RONEY

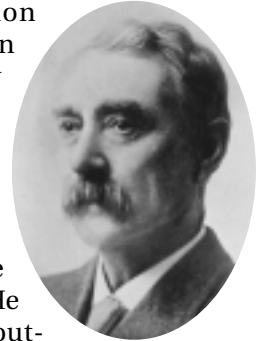
He signed his work like any artist, except his work was bridges — covered bridges. “Nels” Roney (1853-1944; named after a British naval hero) came to Eugene in 1876 and went to work for A.S. Miller on the covered bridge over the Willamette River, in today’s Ferry Street Bridge location. When the great flood of 1881 hit Lane County, it took out more bridges than the local contractors could replace, so Roney started his own bridge-building operations. It was the beginning of a career that would span forty years, during which time he built almost a hundred bridges, most of them covered.

Bridge builders at the time often posted their names above the entrance, and most of the covered bridges in Lane County bore the words, “L.N. Roney, Builder.” But he only got half credit for the Eugene bridge over the Willamette. Another great flood, in 1890, took out the north span of the bridge originally built by Miller. The southern span — with Miller’s name on it — held fast. Roney won the contract to replace the northern span, and signed his name there.

He didn’t confine his work to bridges. From 1886 to 1905, Roney built nearly every important building in Eugene, including the Lane County courthouse, the First National Bank building, and, at the foot of Skinner

Butte, a mansion for Dr. Shelton (known today as the Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House).

Roney was suited to his work in more ways than one. He enjoyed the outdoors, and upon completing a bridge in some remote area, he might head into the woods, hunting and fishing his way back to Eugene. His wife, **Orilla**, would sometimes come out to camp with him at a site, then visit a nearby hot spring and return by stage to meet her husband back home.



Left: Sam Friendly.

Top right: Lord Nelson Roney.

Bottom right: Creswell Bridge, 1884. Nels Roney is second from left, John Whiteaker is far left.

WILL ABRAMS

Another versatile builder in Eugene was Will Abrams (1843-1915). He arrived in the late 1860s and went to work as a carpenter. In 1871, he started Eugene's first planing mill and sash factory. There he produced door frames, shutters, scrollwork, and advertised "Coffins made to order on the shortest notice."

He entered contracting work, and built a number of residences and commercial buildings — including Villard Hall, the second building on the UO campus. He teamed up with Nels Roney in 1886, and for the next two years they built a number of prominent buildings in Eugene. The house they built for Dr. Shelton at the foot of Skinner Butte was actually built twice. The first version was burned just before completion — by "a Eugene man with a grudge against Abrams," according to one source. The original plans came out again and a replica was built.

Abrams also dabbled in agriculture, operating a cider and vinegar business on the old millrace for a while. The waterway passing near 8th and Hilyard streets is gone, but the building still stands — an old weathered barn with the faded letters spelling out W.H. ABRAMS CIDER FACTORY & FRUIT DRYER.

He made his contributions to education as well. As a member of the Union University Association in the early 1870s, raising funds to locate the state university in Eugene, Abrams often solicited donations door-to-door. In one case, he gave far beyond the call of duty. "Mr. W.H. Abrams was bitten quite severely on the right arm the other day by a dog," the local paper reported. "He slung his arm up and is now waiting till sufficiently strong to kill the vicious brute."



Above: Interior of Sam Friendly's store.

FRANK CHAMBERS

One of the most successful and respected businessmen in Eugene history opened his first business venture on April Fool's Day. It was 1887, and Frank Chambers (1865-1946) was twenty-one years old, the "son" of Chambers & Son hardware. He was a young man in a young town — and both had a future.

In 1890, Frank Chambers bought out his father's interest in the store. In 1901, he was joined by his brother. By 1906, he was president of the incorporated Chambers Hardware Company.

He was also heavily involved in the development of Eugene. From the 1890s until his death, he contributed to nearly every type of civic improvement in the area. Roads, mining, milling, banks, real estate, charities, churches, parks, schools, libraries, museums — all were influenced by Frank Chambers. He was variously secretary of the water board, manager of the telephone company, director of the First National Bank of Eugene, and president of the Chamber of Commerce. He was also president of the Eugene Theater Company, and vice president of the Alumni Holding Company — the gift campaign founded in the 1920s by UO President Prince Lucien Campbell.

Chambers' connections to Eugene were personal as well as civic. In 1891, he married **Ida Hendricks**, daughter of Thomas G. Hendricks. She died in 1900, leaving Chambers with their daughter, **Mary**. The widower remarried in 1904 to **Edith Kerns**, sister of Maude Kerns.

The 1927 volume, *History of the Willamette Valley, Oregon*, said Chambers "has long enjoyed well-merited popularity throughout this section of the state and is rightfully regarded as one of its representative men of affairs." He also enjoyed a good laugh, according to this anonymous limerick from about the 1890s:

*In name and in speech he is Frank,
But most happy when playing a prank.
With no water in hell,
He'll find you a well
When the stick gives the witch a slight
yank.*

*He was a young man
in a young town —
and both had a future.*