

WALLOWA QUARTERLY

Special Centennial Supplement

Spring 2020

100th Anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Women's Suffrage: The Fight to Vote

By Mark Highberger

This year marks the centennial of the constitutional amendment that gave women the right to vote. In Oregon, that right had come eight years earlier, when women's suffrage became law. The fight for women's rights in general, however, began long before that fateful election of 1912, and its roots can be traced to the women of the Western frontier.

Frontier Women

Got up at five and got breakfast. Went into the sitting-room and assisted at family prayers. Prepared the little boy's dinner, washed him and made him ready for school... Skimmed and strained the milk. Went to the henhouse to feed my setting hens, swept and dusted the sitting room. Washed the breakfast dishes. Then ironed till 11. Got dinner... Made the beds, worked at mending... for an hour or two, then got supper, washed dishes again, etc. – from the diary of Maria Locey (1840–1924), eastern Oregon homesteader

Women of the Western frontier bore many of the same burdens, endured many of the same privations and hardships, including seemingly unending labor in fields and kitchens, at laundry tubs and clotheslines. They also shared the same kind of isolation and loneliness.

“The making of new farms in the brush and timber in a pioneer community, away from civilization, though hard upon the men in building cabins, fences, barns and bridges,” wrote Abigail Scott Duniway (1834–1915), who knew a thing or two about hardship, having come over the Oregon Trail in 1852, “is doubly trying for the women folks who, with babes in arms... must remain in solitude, a prey to their own thoughts, their chief diversion... being the extra labor that devolves upon them to provide the meals for the [men].”

Yet even in those hardscrabble days along the Oregon frontier, there existed significant differences between unmarried and married women. An unmarried woman in the West could own property, earn wages, and sign contracts under her own name. But marriage ended all that. Once married, women were subject to a legal doctrine known as *coverture*, which determined that, once a woman married, “the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended.” In short, she had no legal rights of her own. Beyond their homes and homesteads, married women—in a day when few women remained unmarried— had little say in their own lives as far as the legal system of the day was concerned. Their money and property and wages all legally belonged to their husbands. But in the 1870s, things began to change.



Women's Rights

In 1872, the Oregon Legislature passed the Married Women's Sole Trader's Bill, which gave married women control of property they had acquired themselves, either before or during their marriages, and freed that property from the “debts and contracts of her husband.” Then in 1878, the legislature passed the Married Women's Property Act, which gave wives the right to own their own property and to keep their own wages. Yet one right that remained apart from women of the late-19th and early-20th century was the right to vote. It wasn't for lack of trying. In one form or another, women's suffrage laws had found their way onto statewide ballots in Oregon five different times, failing

each time (in 1884, 1900, 1906, 1908, and 1910) before finally passing in 1912, on the sixth attempt—more than any other state—with 52 percent of the vote. Do not think, however, that Oregon was particularly open-minded when it came to women’s rights; other states had passed both property- and voting-rights laws for women decades before Oregon did. In fact, the state constitution, created in 1857 by white male citizens of Oregon, gave voting rights only to white male citizens of Oregon—a situation that required more than a half-century of courting the male vote to change. In 1884, when the issue first made the ballot, it failed by 52 percent.

As far as Wallowa County was concerned, its first personal view of the political battle came just a few years after that election, when Abigail Scott Duniway of Portland, a prominent leader of the women’s suffrage movement in the Northwest and known today as Oregon’s “Mother of Equal Suffrage,” was invited to speak at a Fourth of July picnic at Wallowa Lake.

“A stage belonging to the independent line of F.D. McCully of Joseph called for me at La Grande on the afternoon of July 1st,” Duniway wrote on July 5, 1887. “The run was 14 miles to Summerville. The next to Elgin, where we spent the night, arriving at Joseph about 6 p.m. and stopped at the Farnsworth Hotel and was greeted cordially... After a rest of 24 hours, I accepted the kind offices of friends who conveyed me to the borders of Silver [Wallowa] Lake, where the new steamer *Alpha* awaited us in which we embarked for a most enchanting ride. Went in carriages to picnic grounds at head of lake. A bright young lady read the Declaration of Independence, and the band played its sweetest music.”

Early Campaigns

As you might expect, men put up many of the barriers that made it so difficult to change the law, but some of the primary opponents were women who considered the suffrage movement to be “unfeminine,” to present a threat to family stability, and to divert women’s attention from “more pressing” social reforms. In a sense, this forced suffragists to fight the battle on two fronts, one male and the other female, though convincing “white male citizens” of the justice of giving women the same rights as men was the dominant strategy in the campaign. To help this along, Duniway began adding to her signature on campaign material “Mother of Native Sons” or “Mother of Men,” along with her position as “President of Oregon State Equal Suffrage Association.”



After the equal suffrage issue failed at the ballot box by 62 percent in 1900, the battle for women’s suffrage—or *enfranchisement*, as it was sometimes called—started the following year on a relatively quiet note. In fact, one historian wrote that “1901 found the suffrage cause in Oregon almost becalmed upon a sea of indifference.” This was at least in part because of Abigail Scott Duniway’s campaign strategy, which depended on lobbying behind the scenes to avoid arousing public opposition.

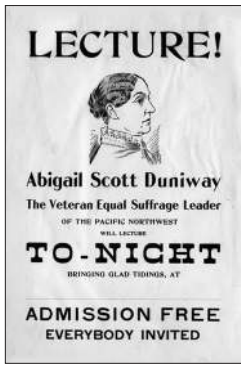
In Wallowa County, the fight for women’s right to vote was perhaps even more quiet than it was at the state level. Virtually no organized political activity, either for or against, took place in the county during 1900–1912, the years the issue was contested at the polls. Locally, most of the debate took place through open letters, outside editorials, and paid advertisements appearing in county newspapers. In an “Open Letter” that appeared in a 1906 issue of *The Wallowa Sun*, for instance, Duniway traced the background of the suffrage movement, calculated the growing number of “Yes” votes cast for it through the years and across the state, and ensured male voters that voting for it in the forthcoming election “will honor Oregon, your mothers, and yourselves.” In response, an editorial appeared in the same issue of the *Sun*, perhaps the only locally-written rebuttal during the campaign:

Do You Really Want Woman Suffrage?

Front-page editorial from *The Wallowa Sun* (May 25, 1906)

Fred G. Conley, Editor and Publisher

In these days when the spirit of a greater Oregon is in the air, the state can ill afford to assume the handicap of woman suffrage. Most people think that there is no danger of it passing, but when it is considered that six years ago it only failed by a scant 2,000 votes in the entire state, and that at that time the woman suffragists had no money, while today they have a campaign fund of more than \$10,000 and have 12 speakers imported from other states campaigning through Oregon, the danger will become more apparent.



So serious does the danger appear to the businessmen of Portland that more than 200 of them recently published a protest against woman suffrage over their own signature. The list as published contained the name of practically every commercial interest, manufacturing and industrial, contained in the state of Oregon. The men who signed this protest represent all walks of life and all political parties. They are not politicians in any sense of the word. They are certainly typical of the brains of the state, and a protest from them is certainly worth a careful consideration of every citizen. Following is the language of the protest as published:

“We, the undersigned, believe that it would be injurious to the general welfare and development of Oregon and therefore unwise to adopt woman suffrage at this time. We believe further that a large majority of the women of the state do not want it.”

The measure failed in 1904 by 56 percent.

In 1908, the next time that equal suffrage made the ballot, Duniway again sent a letter to *The Wallowa Sun*, this time calling the quest for women’s suffrage “an unequal contest” because men “are equipped with ballots [but women] are not.” Furthermore, she argued, “have the faithful mothers of Oregon not earned your affirmative votes for their full and free enfranchisement?”

The measure failed in 1908 by 61 percent, then again in 1910 by 62 percent. As far as the approximately 1,500 male voters in Wallowa County were concerned, in the election of 1910 they voted *for* prohibition by 54 percent, *for* a branch insane asylum by 53 percent, and *against* women’s suffrage by 53 percent.

1912 Victory

For the most part, during the election of 1912 local newspapers stood on the sidelines and kept their distance from the fight. The only sign that they were paying any attention at all were five paid political advertisements that appeared in *The Wallowa Sun*. Typical of the ad in opposition were ones from females opposing their own right to vote, and blaming suffragists for shirking their womanly duties while calling them “ignorant and indifferent women.”

“A few women today are idealizing the ballot,” said one ad placed in 1912 in the *Sun* by an anti-suffrage group with a woman president, “while what will really solve juvenile delinquency, intemperance, the white slave traffic, and the social evil is education, education, and more education in the homes and from the earliest hour of childhood, and therein lies the civic duty of women, bigger than the casting of any ballot and absorbing enough to occupy all the women of Oregon for all time.”

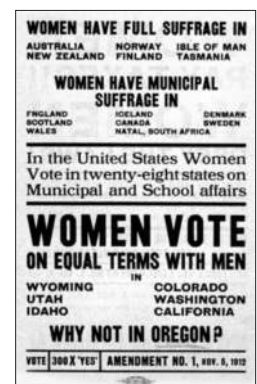
At the same time, some ads in favor of women’s suffrage began gathering endorsements from notable, famous men deemed “statesmen, philosophers, and scientists,” all of whom were the “kind of men [who] want women to vote.” The list included Abraham Lincoln, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Lloyd Garrison, Henry Ward Beecher, and others who “endorsed woman suffrage.”

When it was over in November, the 1,649 male voters in Wallowa County defeated the measure by 51 percent, 847–802. Nevertheless, it passed at the state level by 52 percent, giving white female citizens of Oregon—most women of Asian, African and Native American heritage were still excluded in the new law—the right to vote. Or as Abigail Scott Duniway wrote in an article that appeared in *The Wallowa Sun*: Male voters of Oregon had finally “unlocked the closed door to the citadel of liberty, leaving us free to choose, exactly as you do, as to whether to vote or not to vote at every succeeding election.”

1912–1913 Ladies’ Progressive Club

Near the time of the 1912 election, perhaps because of it, some women in Wallowa formed one of the most influential and constructive organizations the city would ever know—the Ladies’ Progressive Club. Their mission, as reported by *The Wallowa Sun*, was “working for a greater and better Wallowa.”

Among the club’s earliest achievements were the 1912 founding of Wallowa’s first public library, establishing a free reading room and, in 1913, sponsoring a year-long class devoted to the study of politics that would help women become “better equipped to apply their right of suffrage recently given to women of Oregon.” All women were invited and encouraged to attend.



“Oregon women now have the opportunity to aid in solving the problems of the city, state, and nation,” said club president Bessie Baird, “and it is important that they acquire a better knowledge of the laws of the society in which they live.”

1913 Elections

Even though women seemed to have reached the end of their right-to-vote journey, they still found some stumbling blocks in the road to the polls—at least locally. For example, at the state level, within 10 days after the election, Oregon Secretary of State Ben Olcott pledged to do everything he could to make sure women had a voice in forthcoming municipal elections.

“I will use my best endeavors,” he announced, “to expedite the official canvass of the vote cast at the recent election in order that [women], by the passage of the Equal Suffrage Amendment, may participate in the local elections in their home cities and towns.”

Unfortunately, Wallowa’s city attorney, W.T. (“Tom”) Miller, didn’t seem to get the memo. In the spring of 1913, he determined that “Women cannot vote at the special ‘Charter’ election to be held in Wallowa March 18.” The problem? Women, who had earned the right to vote in the November 5 election, had not registered to vote by the October 20 deadline. “City Attorney Miller has carefully looked up the law in the matter,” reported *The Wallowa Sun* in February 1913, “and finds there is no provision for registration of voters before the special election.”

Consequently, in the same issue of the *Sun* in which the front page reports a local rancher gored by a Jersey bull, a trap-shoot at the local gun club, a dancing party at Morelock’s Hall, and ads for watches (W.F. Poole) and soap (City Pharmacy) comes the headline news that “Women Can’t Vote at Special Election.”

But then the fall of 1913 brought another election. “Considerable interest is being shown in Wallowa in the special election to be held November 4, when the question as to whether Wallowa shall have saloons will again be decided,” reported an October issue of the *Sun*. “Many rumors are afloat about town that women will not be allowed to vote at this election, but so far as can be determined, there is no foundation for it. More voters have registered for this election than ever before in Wallowa, the heavy vote being due to women. Over 300 [voters] have registered when the books closed Saturday night.” Of these, approximately 40 percent were women.

1914 Election

It’s said that when Abigail Scott Duniway went to the polls in the election of 1914, she became the first Oregon woman ever to vote. A historic occasion. That same year, on the far side of the state, a Wallowa woman was making history of her own, though on a smaller and more local scale. That’s because by the time the election rolled around, not only had women registered to vote—a reported 135 of them in Wallowa alone—but also one of them was running for office.



Bessie Richardson Baird and husband J.C. Baird

In an October issue of *The Wallowa Sun*, listed under the headline “Here Are the Men Who Ask For Your Vote,” was “Bessie Baird, Socialist.” The Wallowa City Librarian and president of the Ladies’ Progressive Club, she ran against the usual Democrat and Republican, making it a three-way race. Bessie won the four precincts of Wallowa but lost the county vote. Even so, it was a historic occasion. The results:

Wallowa Precincts: Bessie Baird (Socialist), 234; G.W. Franklin (Democrat, incumbent), 201; Martin H. Tucker (Republican), 140.

Wallowa County: G.W. Franklin, 1,377; Martin H. Tucker, 932; Bessie Baird, 442.

Of the 2,751 voters in the county—a 67 percent increase since the 1912 election because of the number of women who registered— 16 percent had voted for Bessie Baird. Not close, of course, but the fact she entered the race at all was a courageous act of historical significance.

POLITICAL ANNOUNCEMENTS
PAID
BESSIE BAIRD
Wallowa, Oregon
Socialist Candidate for
COUNTY TREASURER.
Mrs. Baird has been a resident of Wallowa County twelve years. She has had fifteen years' experience in public work, including two years in the Assessor's office in Oregon, and two years in the Treasurer's office in Washington, and is fully competent to fill the office for which she is a candidate.

WALLOWA QUARTERLY

Newsletter of the Wallowa History Center

Preserving Our Past for the Future

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Wallowa's Wrestler

Jim Noregaard (1889–1983)

By Mark Highberger

Part 2 of 2

During the time he has been wrestling, Jim Noregaard has met nearly all the good men in the game and has made an imposing record. – The Wallowa Sun, January 22, 1926

Through the early 1920s, Wallowa's Jim Noregaard wrestled the best men he could find, including a 1920 rematch with Ted Thye. It was a bout deemed so important that Duncan McLean had "a special ring built in the theatre and raised high enough so all spectators can see clearly." What they saw was Jim Noregaard in top form.

"The wrestling match that was pulled off in McLean's Theatre Saturday night between Jim Noregaard and Ted Thye was well worth the price of admission," the *Sun* said about the February match. "Thye was to throw Jim twice in one hour. He failed to even make a start to put Jim on the mat. Just as soon as Jim got his measure, he played with Thye the rest of the hour, worrying him all the time. Thye could see his championship honors vanishing, and the harder he tried, the less success he made at the handicap."

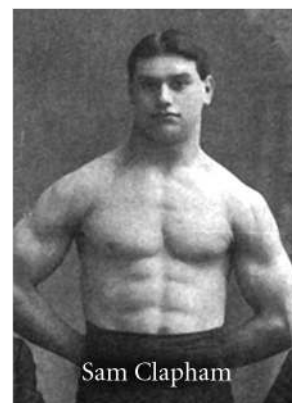
Another highlight for Noregaard came in a 1924 handicap match in Wallowa against Sam Clapham, the British light-heavyweight champion. At this point in his career, Noregaard, now 34 and still weighing in as a 165-pound middleweight, had been in the sport professionally for 10 years. In that time, he had wrestled approximately 50 matches, losing just 6 of them and drawing 3 times. Of the four times he had wrestled Ted Thye, he had won once, lost twice, and drawn once. Now he was to face another champion.

"A good deal of interest is being shown by sports fans in the wrestling match scheduled for next Saturday," the *Sun* reported in late February of 1924. "Sam Clapham, the light-heavyweight champion of Great Britain who weighs in at 175 pounds, will go on the mat with Jim Noregaard, the well-known local wrestler."

This was a handicap match in which Chapman had "to pin Noregaard's shoulders to the mat twice in one hour or lose the match." It was also a winner-take-all match: The winner would take home the net proceeds from the gate receipts, while the loser got nothing. Once again, Noregaard filled the stands and did not disappoint the crowd. The March 7, 1924 edition of *The Wallowa Sun* reported the match:

"Local wrestling history was made Saturday evening when Sam Clapham met Jim Noregaard in a match here. About 200 people crowded into the Schiffler building to witness the event. Clapham gained the applause of the crowd before the match in a clean-cut plea for sportsmanship and courtesy to the ladies.

"The contestants grappled, and tremendous strength met tremendous strength. Clapham made frequent use of the headlock, while Noregaard did best with the toehold. The superior training of the Englishman was displayed in his skillful use of scientific wrestling, but the great strength of the local man saved him from a number of dangerous situations.



Sam Clapham

“Noregaard had the advantage in a number of holds, however, and once with a toehold nearly pinned his opponent’s shoulders to the mat. A wrenched neck dazed Noregaard after 44 minutes of intensive effort, and Clapham was able to get his first and only fall with a headlock. After a 10-minute intermission, the men again met, and in 16 minutes of action wrestled indecisively. As the match was a handicap against Clapham in that he was required to win two falls in the hour, the receipts went to Noregaard.

“In a closing speech, Mr. Clapham stated that he did not believe anyone could throw Noregaard in an hour. The sportsmanship of the two wrestlers was excellent, and neither had any complaint against the other.”

Just over two months later, Noregaard met Billy Edwards, the world light-heavyweight champion.

“An event of unusual interest has been scheduled for next Saturday,” the *Sun* reported in early May of 1924, “when Billy Edwards, light-heavyweight champion of the world, will meet Jim Noregaard, the local wrestler, in a handicap match. The affair is being put on under the auspices of the American Legion in the gymnasium, and will start promptly with some snappy preliminaries.



“Edwards recently created a sensation when he threw Ted Thye at Portland for the world’s championship belt, which he will bring with him for exhibition. He comes from Kansas City and is touted as a man of unusual strength. He has agreed to throw the local man twice in 90 minutes or forfeit the match. Noregaard displayed his ability at grappling when he held Clapham, the English champion, to only one fall. Edwards comes under a guarantee of \$150. A large number of sport fans from eastern Oregon is expected at the match, as much interest is manifested in the new champion.”

Billy Edwards, known as the “Kansas City Butcher Boy,” had a background of taking on all-comers at carnivals with an offer of \$100 to anyone who could beat him, then walking away with both the victory and the wagers.

“We toured the small towns,” he said of his work, “and while I met a lot of town champions, none knew the rudiments of wrestling. They were strong, but strength alone is not enough.” Then he ran into Jim Noregaard.

“The wrestling match held Saturday evening at the gym between Billy Edwards, world light-heavyweight champion, and Jim Noregaard of this city proved to be one of the hardest matches ever seen by local fans,” reported the *Sun*. “With Noregaard on the offensive for the first half-hour, the champion was forced to work hard to preserve his title. Then Edwards managed to play the card with which he won his title, the flying headlock.

“The local man withstood one attack of this sort, but at the end of 56 minutes, in quick succession, four of these holds so strained the cords of his neck that he was pinned to the mat in a dazed condition. Edwards stated in closing that he was surprised at Noregaard and considered this one of his hardest matches in the state.”

Not long after this match, professional wrestling changed abruptly. In fact, wrestling historians point to a January 1925 bout in which Ed “Strangler” Lewis, the world heavyweight champion, wrestled newcomer Wayne Munn for the title, as the event that triggered the change. Lewis threw the match, and that was the turning point; it threw open the gates to wrestling as a spectacle rather than a sport. From then on, in an effort to become more profitable and less predictable, wrestling began sliding away from sport and toward “sports entertainment—fully scripted, predetermined match-ups, with chosen champions.” The results were bigger crowds, more money, and quirky wrestlers.

Wrestling in Two Eras

Jim Noregaard wrestled during two distinct eras: one of wrestling as legitimate sport, the other as staged entertainment, with the dividing line coming in the mid-1920s.

“My father told me once that in one match his opponent came into the ring with a horseshoe tucked into the waistband of his tights,” says Ray Noregaard, Jim’s son, “while my father hid a small cup of blood. He was supposed to hit my father in the head with the horseshoe, and my father was supposed to spill the blood. I’m not sure how that worked out.”

Masked Unknown Defies Noregaard, Challenge Accepted, Match Jan. 30

WALLOWA WRESTLER CHALLENGED AND ACCEPTS

LaGRANDE, ORE., Jan. 19.—(To the Editor of the Wallowa Sun)—Hear that you have a wrestler there and would like to extend him a challenge through your columns.

I am on a wrestling tour here in the west and am meeting all comers under a mask. After beating a sufficient number of men to obtain recognition I'll force Ted Thye or the champion to meet me in Portland.

Would like to meet your local man around the 30th of this month.
Yours for clean sport, THE MASKED UNKNOWN.

WALLOWA, ORE., Jan. 20.—(To the Masked Unknown)—Referring to your letter asking for a match in Wallowa on January 30th, will gladly accept your challenge. Wrestling to be under Marquis of Queensbury rules, the winner getting two falls out of three or the referee's decision at the end of the two hour time limit. Sincerely,
JIM NOREGAARD.

In 1926, for instance, Jim Noregaard was challenged by a wrestler who called himself the “Masked Unknown,” mostly because...well, because he wore a mask and so his identity was unknown. But despite his questionable fashion sense, the guy in the mask was no pushover.

“Whoever he is,” the *Sun* reported in late January, “the Masked Unknown has been creating a sensation along the coast, where he has been meeting and defeating some of the best men in the wrestling game.”

Noregaard, of course, accepted the challenge and defeated his opponent, who was unmasked during the bout, which prompted the Masked Unknown to call a foul. The referee, however, disagreed. So did the crowd and the newspaper.

“Noregaard lived up to his reputation of a high-class wrestler,”

the *Sun* said of the match, “and ably demonstrated that fact that he can be classed with the best in the game.”

The match with the Masked Unknown may have marked the turning point for local wrestling, moving it from sport to spectacle. Yet the matches at McLean’s continued, and Noregaard’s reputation and popularity remained unchanged. In fact, the only thing that seemed to hold him back was that making a living kept getting in the way.

“Jim Noregaard and his record on the mat are already well-known to Wallowa sports fans,” the *Sun* reported. “Ted Thye, when he was the light-heavyweight champion, said that Noregaard would be unbeatable if he could spend more time in training for matches.”

Because Noregaard was a full-time farmer but only a part-time wrestler, and because he traveled to matches throughout the region—from La Grande to Long Creek and from Joseph to John Day—training time was often hard to find.

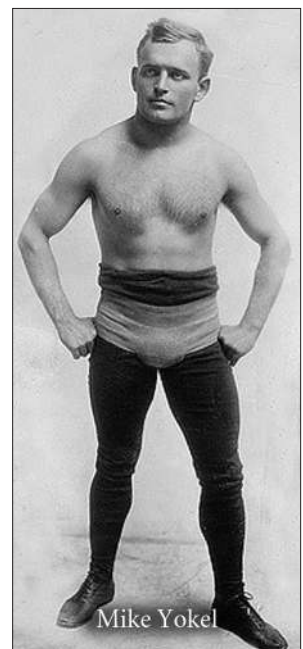
“Noregaard has not been paying much attention to wrestling the last month, as farm work has kept him busy,” the *Sun* reported in 1926. “However, he always is in good physical condition and able to make the best of them extend themselves at all times.”

The same year, Noregaard was in good enough condition to challenge the world champion to a match. “Wallowa will have a world’s championship wrestling match,” the *Sun* reported in February, “when Jim Noregaard of Wallowa meets Mike Yokel, the light-heavyweight champion, in a finish match. The belt, emblematic of the championship, recently won by Yokel from Ted Thye, will be at stake. Definite arrangements for the match here were made after Yokel wired from Portland that he would accept Noregaard’s challenge and terms for a championship match. This will be the first world’s championship match ever staged in the county. It will be staged in McLean’s Theatre. The big match will start promptly at 9 o’clock, following the first picture show. Prices will be the same as always.”

Unfortunately, the “world’s championship” didn’t materialize; the week before the match, Yokel had lost his world championship belt. But he still came to Wallowa, where Noregaard lost to him in a “furious match.”

By the time the 1930s arrived, professional wrestlers had divided themselves into either heroes or villains on the mat. Noregaard, of course, was one of the heroes who won the hearts of fans, even when he wasn’t wrestling at home.


“Jim Noregaard lost a wrestling match to Jack Woods of Eagle Valley Wednesday night at Halfway,” the *Sun* reported in December of 1933. “At the beginning of the match, the largest share of the crowd was for the local man, Woods. Noregaard won the first round. Woods came from his corner in the second round with a towel that he wrapped around Noregaard’s neck and chocked him several seconds before the referee thought to take the towel away. The crowd hissed, booed, and yelled ‘Rotten! Rotten!’ In the third round the referee got a kick on the shin by one of the wrestlers and apparently couldn’t give Noregaard credit for two falls during the 10-minute round. Time was called, and the crowd hissed and



WRESTLING!
 McLean Theater, Wallowa, Ore.
FRIDAY, OCT. 23
DOUBLE MAIN EVENT

BARON VON LING, 190 Fort Worth, Texas	RAY MCCARROLL, 195 La Grande
vs. RALPH DERN, 210	JIM NOREGAARD, 180
CURT ALFREY, Referee	DAVE PROVOLT La Grande
FIRST PRELIMINARY 8 p. m. Sharp	VERN STOWE, 165 Elgin

Picture Gazette Rules and Australian White Rules to Govern Admission: 25c—50c—75c



bood Woods and the referee. Woods won in the fourth round. Noregaard was a clean wrestler and practically all the crowd had deserted Woods at the beginning of the second round.”

Three years later, in 1936, near the end of Noregaard’s wrestling career, the *Sun* carried an article in October about what might have been his last local bout as a wrestler. He was 47 years old at the time.

“Wrestling is coming back to Wallowa with a bang!” announced the *Sun*. “The once-popular sport here has again caught the fancy, and a big double main event of top-notch idols that promises to have fans standing in their seats is billed for Wallowa on Friday night in the McLean Theatre. In the second main event there will be the old favorites, Ray McCarroll, ex-bulldogging champion of the world,

and Jim Noregaard of Wallowa. Jim has been in training in La Grande for the last two months and is said to be in the best condition he ever has known. His feats on the mat here are too well-known to need elaboration.” After this, the next mention of Jim Noregaard on a wrestling mat comes in 1938, when he served as a referee in a La Grande match.

In a wrestling career stretching across a quarter-century, Jim Noregaard changed his address on a number of occasions, being referred to variously as hailing from Rondowa (1915), Heppner (1915), Baker (1920), Enterprise (1933), La Grande (1936), and Imnaha (1940), among other places, before finally ending up in the Portland area, where he died in 1983 at the age of 93. Along the way he also picked up a number of nicknames: Hercules, Iron Man, Farmer Wrestler. But most frequently, he was known as “the local man” or simply “Jim Noregaard of Wallowa.”

* * *

Ask the Wallowa History Center

What was the “one-cow law” in Wallowa?

Wallowa’s One-Cow Law

From *The Wallowa Record* (April-May, 1949)

Nearly 30 Wallowa citizens assembled for the regular session of the city council Tuesday night. About half of them were there to protest enactment of an ordinance controlling livestock within the city limits. The proposed livestock ordinance would limit each householder to one cow and a calf, and would entirely prohibit the keeping of sheep and pigs within the city limits. No mention is made in the proposal of horses, nor of chickens and rabbits. The principal spokesman of the delegation pointed out that many Wallowa families depend for a share of their income upon raising hogs and the milking of cows. Many such householders, he said, are exerting every care to keep their barnyards sanitary and not to offend neighbors. (April 7, 1949)

An ordinance prohibiting the keeping of more than one cow [per family] within a district within the Wallowa city limits was enacted Tuesday night by the city council. Recognizing certain areas within the city where the keeping of livestock is not offensive to adjacent property owners, the council designated an area within the city limits that the livestock ordinance would apply to. All property outside this district is not affected.

The area where the ordinance applies is defined as being bounded on the north by Fifth Street, on the west by the city limits, on the south by Lockwood Street, and on the east by the Wallowa River and a line approximately 300 feet east of Holmes Street. The ordinance entirely prohibits the keeping of sheep or hogs within the city limits. No mention is made of horses. The proposed ordinance had been the topic of wide discussion, both for and against. Complaints have grown in number each summer regarding odors of barnyards within the city. Councilmen heard protests of a number of livestock owners who said they would welcome a good, stiff sanitation code, and would stand inspection of their barnyards. They said many Wallowa families depend in part on income derived from milk and from the raising of pork. (May 5, 1949)

Wallowa's Electric Theater

The first decade of the 20th century has been called the “nickelodeon era” for the wildly-popular nickelodeon theaters that sprung up across America. In essence, these were the nation’s first “movie” theaters, though film was only one of their offerings. Other attractions included live performances of singing, dancing, vaudeville acts, and even sporting events. Even so, movies—known then as “moving pictures”—were the big draw.

“The nickelodeons are important factors in the entertainment of the masses today,” *The Moving Picture World* reported in 1907, “and they, springing up everywhere and in every conceivable city, town or hamlet, are all getting a good livelihood, and the prospects for the future are bright.”

Once nickelodeons—named for their nickel admission charge—began emphasizing films, they became known as “electric theaters” (or “theatres,” as it was commonly spelled then).

Wallowa’s own electric theatre arrived courtesy of James P. Morelock. He bought the necessary film equipment from a La Grande electric theater owner who had closed his business because of “not sufficient patronage.”



James P. Morelock

The opening of Morelock’s Electric Theatre in late November of 1908 seemed promising, playing to “a crowded house.” It went on to advertise programs such as “two reels of film besides the feature film and illustrated songs by good singers.” It also promised a “change of program every night” on Wednesday and Saturday evenings, as well as “skating Tuesday and Friday nights.” (Morelock’s Electric Theatre was first opened as a roller-skating rink.) All this for a 15-cents admission charge.

Yet just two months later, at the end of January 1909, Morelock’s Electric Theatre was already advertising its “closing show.” Perhaps Morelock ran into the same “patronage” problems as had the La Grande businessman. If so, he wasn’t alone.

“George Rusk was down from Joseph Monday,” *The Wallowa Sun* reported in July of the same year. “He has recently closed the electric theatre and will again begin working as an electrician. He says that the towns are too small to support an electric theatre with profit.”

Sherwood Electric Theater (– *La Grande Chronicle*, October 2, 1908)

The Sherwood Electric Theater has been closed for the present, and last night saw the last performance in the popular show house. The reason for closing the theater is given by Mr. Sherwood as not sufficient patronage to justify the outlay necessary for putting on vaudeville. Mr. Sherwood has always run a clean and neat show, and has made friends of many theatergoers by the courteous treatment extended to all.

Opera House Theater (– *The Wallowa Sun*, October 23, 1908)

J.P. Morelock returned from La Grande Friday with the Powers machine, which was used in the Sherwood Electric Theatre in La Grande. Mr. Morelock purchased the machine, which is a high-grade machine, and it will be enclosed in a fireproof cage suspended from the ceiling. The cage will be eight feet from the floor. Mr. Morelock has engaged Groot & Hawley to paper and paint the Opera House on the interior, and they began their work Wednesday. Later he will put in a furnace to heat the stage and orchestra pit. The main building will be heated by three large stoves. Ample fire protection is afforded by city water reaching the prompter’s seat over the stage.

Electric Theater Opens (– *The Wallowa Sun*, November 27, 1908)

J.P. Morelock opened his electric theatre Saturday night to a crowded house, and the audience went away pleased. The program at Morelock’s Wednesday evening was a pleasing bit of farce. Mr. Morelock is putting a good clean show before the public and fully deserves the patronage he is getting.

Morelock’s Electric Theatre
Good Clean 15 Cent Show. Different from the average moving picture show.
Two Reels of film besides the feature film and illustrated songs by good singers.
Change of Program every night.
Wednesday and Saturday evenings.
Skating Tuesday and Friday nights.

Electric SHOW
Saturday Night
Double Program
Four reels of moving Pictures; two Illustrated Songs; two sets of Scenic slides.
Admission, Adults 25c Children, 15c. This is the
Closing Show
of Morelock’s Electric Theatre.
First Show begins at 7:15 P. M. The Second at 9:30 P. M.

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New Wallowa Buildings

From *The Wallowa Sun* (June 3, 1910)

Nineteen-ten promises to be the banner year for Wallowa from a building standpoint. In addition to the new schoolhouse which will be built, the Presbyterian church is now well under way and will represent an outlay of over \$6,000, while improvements to the Methodist church have been begun with a contract for \$3,000 exclusive of the reseating. Both will be credits to a town of twice the size of Wallowa.

Couch and McDonald have excavation nearly completed for a native-stone building on the lot between Tulley Hall and the barber shop. Wallowa Mercantile Company is nearly ready to commence on a concrete building to reach from the Wallowa Drug Store to the City Pharmacy, 60 feet wide and 110 feet long. The present store building will be moved to another lot.

J.J. Wilson also has the contract for a new glass front for William Sherod in the East Oregon Mercantile Company's store. It will be a modern front in every respect with a 10-foot lobby. Every carpenter in town has been busy with the work on residences. Dozens of new ones have been planned, and many are ready to occupy, yet scarce a vacant house can be found in town. Many of the old residences have been remodeled, and others have been renovated with paint and paper.

Bezine Hotel Restaurant

From *The Wallowa Sun* (January 11, 1923)

A new restaurant has been opened in the old Bezine Hotel east of the Frick Bakery under the management of Cressman and Reed. Four tables have been put in and regular meals, as well as short orders, will be served. [Frick's Bakery was on the northwest corner of Main and Spruce streets, the hotel on the northeast corner.]