



By PAT EDWARDS
Of the News

Editor's note: This article by local writer and historian Pat Edwards, a guest writer for The News, presents a unique first-person account of a family's opportunity to learn about their roots in West Lane County.

"O how I would like to see you all and Addie and her family together again. Winnie can sing in good earnest now. We'd go down to granies on the hills behind the Mill to see the little lambies - only I have not the little lambs. I want to see Winnie so bad some times. I do not know what to do. If I could see her come runing in as she use to do it would do my sole good. Winnie and Flossie are grandma's little pets." (Jerusha Petrie, July 15, 1883)

Lorane - Jerusha and her husband, Jost Petrie, took a giant step when they left behind their family, home and businesses in Wisconsin in 1882 to move to Oregon. They hoped to buy a large parcel of farm land on which their whole family could live and work. Three of their grown children came to Oregon with them.

Their son, Channing, his wife, Mary, and daughter, Winnie, stayed behind in Wisconsin to sell their home and businesses with the promise that maybe they would follow.



Christine Gallardo makes a rubbing

Jost turned 60 years of age in 1882, shortly after arriving in Oregon. He and Jerusha settled for a year near their daughter, Ellen, and her husband, Sam Lockwood, in Eugene City while he searched throughout central Oregon trying to find the right piece of property. They eventually bought 1,200 acres - part of the Cartwright donation land claim - south of the community of Lorane, Oregon.

Jost and Jerusha sent frequent letters to Channing's family describing in detail the land they bought, farming practices, flora and fauna, crops, weather...

"There are a great many foul weeds in Oregon mainly owing to two things Viz lack of frost to kill fall weeds, and fearfully slovenly Farming, as the people have depended on grazing principally & have neglected the plow. If they had plowed and attended to their business as you or I would they would raise far better Grain and far less weeds." (Jost Petrie, August 12, 1883)

They also commented on the community, the events and their longing to see little Winnie again. But their efforts were in vain. Channing's family never made it to Oregon, and at the age of 10, their little Winnie had died.

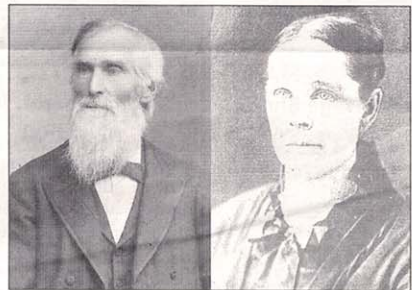
Channing carefully saved those letters from his parents. In later years, his son, Merton frequently brought the tin box containing the letters down from his closet shelf and lovingly read the words, penned decades before, to his grandchildren. The words struck a chord in the Petrie's great-great grandchildren. They became fascinated with the ancestors they had never met, but felt they knew so well.

On Saturday, August 10, 2008, 23 members of the Petrie family arrived in Lorane from Wisconsin, New York, Chicago and California to touch their roots, to reacquaint themselves with their great-great-grandparents and to relive the words in those letters written more than a century before.

As the author of *From Sawdust and Cider to Wine: A History of Lorane, Oregon and the Siuslaw Valley* (2006), I had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with one of the Petrie descendants, Christine Petrie Gallardo, when she contacted me in early 2006. She wrote to me about the Petrie letters, and soon the family gave me permission to include excerpts of them in the book.

Christine contacted me to say that a family member was getting married in Portland on August 9 and the family wanted to caravan to Lorane the next day to visit the cemetery where the Petries were buried and to see the land on which they lived.

I arranged to meet them at King Estate Winery, on which the Lorane Grange Cemetery is located, and asked another local historian, Walt Hayes, to serve as their tour guide. I also asked Elsie Lohrey and her daughter, Christine Smith, Petrie descendants who live



Jost and Jerusha Petrie migrated to Oregon from Wisconsin in 1882 to farm the Willamette Valley.

in Cottage Grove, to join them.

After I met with the group and answered their questions on the history of the area and handed out maps showing where the original Petrie land lay, Walt Hayes took over as tour guide. Hayes, an established "water-witcher" in the area, had just completed a project commissioned by the Cottage Grove Genealogical Society to "witch" or "dowse" the cemetery, in order to get accurate locations of each of the graves for which headstones were missing.

He began the morning's tour by giving a demonstration to the family of how his dowsing rods turned ever so gently as he passed over the Petries' graves. The family made rubbings of the monument inscriptions and roamed around the cemetery until it was time for their scheduled wine tasting and tour of King Estate hosted by Ed King, Jr. and his wife, Carolyn. After lunch on the terrace, the family spent the rest of the day visiting the places that Jost and Jerusha had described in those long-ago letters.

I was easily able to feel the connection the family felt. After reading and transcribing those letters, I, too, formed a solid bond with the Petries. Their personalities came through in their letters so strongly that by the time I finished reading them, I also felt a kinship with them.

"Winnie, I gave all my (Children and Grand Children who are out here) some candy on my Birth day. I wished very much that you were here to have some too - Tel your Pa to take some of GrandPa's money and buy some candy for all of you. Grand Pa" (Jost Petrie, November 18, 1882)

Christine Gallardo later wrote, "Our family would like to extend a very heartfelt thank-you for setting up a really memorable day for us in Lorane! Wayne and I have always wanted to see Oregon and his land, but Wayne especially loves the wildlife and would love to follow Jost's steps to Oregon!"

It was a memorable time for all.