

# From Sawdust and Cider to Wine

## **A book review and comments from Reida:**

September is the harvest month on our farm. Most days see me picking and canning or drying some goodies from the garden and orchard. It is also the month when we spread the summer's aged manure and bedding on the hill pasture before the rains come and the hill becomes too slippery for the "powerwagon." Finally there is wood to bring down from the slash piles on clearcuts behind our land, cords of it to saw and split and fit into the woodshed for our winter's heat. Most of the hard work is done now, and soon it will be time to make apple juice and butcher turkeys and lambs. All this sounds like real farming, but let me assure you, it is just play compared to the daily work routines of the people who lived on farms a century or even a half a century ago. The history of Eugene and its environs is fascinating. I think we all long to know more of what the land looked like in the past, how it was used, how people lived, how they worked, and what they did for enjoyment.

We are so fortunate to live in a recently settled part of America where the stories of the pioneer past are still alive in the memories of the grandchildren and the great grandchildren of the early settlers. Many families have invaluable collections of letters, and some of the earliest houses survive. So much has been preserved, but so much is on the verge of being lost as the old-timers pass on. That is why a book like the new edition of Patricia Ann Edwards' history of Lorane and the Siuslaw Valley is such a treasure. Originally published as *Sawdust and Cider* with coauthors Nancy Seales O'Hearn and Marna Lee Hing in 1987, the new, greatly expanded and richly illustrated edition is titled *From Sawdust and Cider to Wine*. The book presents short family histories of people who settled in the Lorane area, starting with the earliest settlers who came in the 1850s. The genealogical history, though very important, will not capture the imagination like the stories of subsistence hunting and fishing, land clearing and crop planting, along with commentaries on life and housekeeping in early Oregon. The section on the one-room schools, which provided instruction for all the grades, is delightful. Picture boys at Letz Creek School setting fishing lines behind the school each morning, gathering their catch (sometimes a salmon) at recess and again at lunchtime, keeping the fish fresh in the school sink on the front porch until classes finished.

The book is full of fascinating new information. Did you know that the settlers raised all their own grain, wheat and oats, but rarely corn, which demanded a warmer climate? The grain had to be hauled to Drain or Cottage Grove to be milled, a full day's trip because of the hills until Lorane had a mill of its own. In a letter dated December 23, 1883, from Jerusha Petrie to her son in Wisconsin, we learn that "Flees are the worst pests we have here in Oregon." The letters of Jerusha and her husband Jost are a fund of information on farming practices, crops, weather and household affairs. For example: Two very dry summers in a row were hard on the crops. Jerusha felt very well paid to have received \$2.50 for six dozen eggs and two pounds of butter. Jost complains of poor land use practices--primitive farming that had been hard on the land, land which had only been cleared and cultivated for a bit over thirty years.

There were thriving, tiny towns in the area, Hadleyville and Gowdyville, which no longer exist, and more schools. The early settlers of Lorane hoped that the town would be reached by the railroad but that never happened, which meant the town would never have the numerous and elegant buildings we find in the historically richer communities of Drain or Cottage Grove. Probably the lack of great wealth or a single major industry has meant that less has changed in Lorane. One can still recognize the town and surrounding farmland found in the book's illustrations. Nonetheless, the history of Lorane and its countryside must be the history of its economics. Pat chronicles the backbone of the traditional economy, logging and farming. There were so many sawmills, even though this area had poor connections to markets. Dairying was once important and of course there were the famous Lorane Orchards, thousands of acres of apples and pears which flourished in the 1920s.

Wonderfully, this new edition of *Sawdust and Cider*, as the final part of its title "To Wine" reveals, tells the story of the many people who are reinventing Lorane's economy in ways which are creative, earth friendly and diverse. Besides the five wineries in the area, there are B&Bs in historic houses, organic farms, nurseries, an elegant dressage establishment, a soap company, artists' studios, and of course the Edwards family's Lorane Family Store.

We got our copy of the newly published *Sawdust and Cider to Wine* a week ago, and I confess that I have actually not quite finished it, probably because it is such a treat to spend time with the old photographs, and savor the 'old-timey' tales. If you like history and want to find out more about the early days in the south part of Lane County, you should definitely add this book to your library.

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*From Sawdust & Cider to Wine: A History of Lorane, Oregon and the Siuslaw Valley* by Pat Edwards  
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