

Douglas County Historical Society

Maintaining, preserving & exhibiting the Floed-Lane House, and its contents. To educate and engage our citizenry about the specific history of the Floed-Lane House and Douglas County, Oregon.

Cyrus W. Hedden

Posted on [January 5, 2011](#) by [DCHS](#)

See also: [The Battle of Battle Rock](#)



Taken from The Umpqua Trapper, Vol. 41, No.4. Winter 2005

*Cyrus W. Hedden
(1820 – 1911)
“Oregon Pioneer”*

*Written By:
William M. Barber*

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Levi Scott, the founder of Scottsburg, and a friend of both Cyrus Hedden and Loren L. Williams was living away from the area at the time, he wrote the following letter to Cyrus inquiring about his and Williams’ recent encounter with the Indians:

Cirous Haden

I wish you to rite me in relation to the difficulty you had with the indians at coos bay how you come to go thare how the attack took place and whare, the names of all your party, who was killed or wounded youre trip up the umpcaw river, what indians it was if you know whare willoms died what he was worth and disposial he made of his money how long he lay with his wound before he recovered

Respectfully youres

Levi Scott

Levi Scott’s information was incorrect and it is uncertain whether the letter to Cyrus (or a copy of it) was ever sent. Loren L. Williams died in 1881 at the age of fifty, however, he never forgot his lifelong friend, Cyrus W. Hedden. In his will, he bequeathed \$5,000.00 to Cyrus.

The story of Hedden’s epic struggle to save Loren L. Williams continues to stand as a classic example of the character and fortitude of Oregon’s early settlers and

pioneers, and an example of brotherhood.

Cyrus was not destined, nor did he want to become known as an “Indian fighter”. He preferred to be known as a merchant. When he first arrived at the newly developing community of Scottsburg, it looked promising to him. The community was rapidly becoming a gold rush provisioning center. Sailing ships from various ports were coming up the Umpqua River on the tide to the end of tidewater and unloading their cargoes. Pack trains were being assembled and were carrying goods through the gentle pass to the central valleys and the gold fields.

When Cyrus settled in Scottsburg, there were two stores, one in a tent made from the sails of the wrecked schooner, **Bostonian**, the other in a prefabricated zinc building that had been shipped around the Horn. Cyrus firmly believed it was here that he could and would make his niche in life.

Following his short recovery and recuperation, Cyrus worked at whatever he could get to do, and it wasn't long before he sailed to San Francisco, where he purchased a full outfit of blacksmiths tools, and returned to Scottsburg and opened a blacksmith shop. From that time forward, he prospered and gave his entire attention to his trade, until the fall of 1852, when he established himself in the mercantile business in Scottsburg, the circumstances of which appear vague.

On the second day of the July 1852 session of the Umpqua County Court, Edward Spicer and Loren L. Williams petitioned the Court for and received grocery licenses for one year. They paid the fee of \$50.00 each for the licenses. Both men lived in Scottsburg, however, since Williams was listed for the poll tax on the 1852 tax roll, it might be fair to assume that he ran a store for another individual, perhaps Cyrus Hedden



In the fall of 1854, Cyrus W. Hedden married Margaret Sawyers, daughter of John Jacob Sawyers, another pioneer family of Umpqua (Douglas) County. Four children were born of the marriage: John N., Hulda (who later became Mrs. John A. Fryer), and two more daughters who died in infancy.

Owing to his own diligence and good management, Cyrus became a very successful businessman. He also became more interested and involved in the continued up building of Scottsburg and the surrounding area.



Mrs. Cyrus (Margaret) Hedden with
John & Hulda

On December 30, 1859, Cyrus Hedden was elected as one of three directors of the newly formed Scottsburg School District (the new district, Umpqua School District No. 13, consisted of all the land west and northwest of Golden Creek in the Scottsburg precinct). Scottsburg had held a school session in 1858, attended by sixteen students. A school session in 1859 was attended by fifteen students. By forming the district, Scottsburg became eligible for county funds for the students.

Roads, and the condition of them, was always a major concern of the area citizens and a major topic at the sessions of the Umpqua County Court. The December, 1859 session of the Court appointed Cyrus to be the supervisor for the Scottsburg Road District, one of fifteen road districts in the county. As road supervisor, Cyrus had the responsibility of knowing of every person residing within his district who were liable to perform labor on the public roads. Every person was liable for one day's work in opening a road in his district. After that, each person had to perform one day's labor for each two thousand dollars of taxable property they owned. The alternative was to pay the supervisor \$2.00 for each day's work not performed. A day's work was defined as eight hours and workers were expected to work diligently. As supervisor, Cyrus had to maintain the fingerboard at junctions giving direction and mileage to communities. Cyrus petitioned the Court to be excused from accepting the position of road supervisor, however, the Court ruled, "that since it appeared that insufficient reason was given, the petition was denied." The law that governed the road supervisor fined anyone who refused to accept the position \$25.00. Cyrus served his position with the same diligence and attention he gave his business.



Cyrus, Margaret & Hulda
Hedden



Cyrus & wife, Margaret

The winter of 1861-62 was a major disaster to Scottsburg and the surrounding area. One report stated that only Lyon's Hotel and a few houses remained in Upper Scottsburg, while another said that Hedden's Store had survived the flood (a definitive conclusion as to surviving businesses and homes has never been established). One thing was certain, many people left the Umpqua valleys. Those who stayed, like the Hedden family, just worked harder.

As a result of the June 1862 election, Cyrus Hedden was elected to serve as an Umpqua County Commissioner. At the first meeting (July 7, 1862) Umpqua County officers, Cyrus and the other officers approved the proposal to move the courthouse to the Yoncalla Institute.

The September 1862 session of the Umpqua County Court met at the Yoncalla

Institute at Yoncalla, occupying the upper floor. Loren L. Williams was the clerk, having also been elected in the June 1862 elections. Among much business, the Court approved the payment of \$20.00 to Cyrus for services and mileage as County Commissioner.



Hedden Family Home 1896

Following his session at the September 1862 Court, Cyrus would soon have an issue that he would have to address as Commissioner. The Oregon State Legislature had sealed the fate of Umpqua County by passing an act to consolidate the counties of Umpqua and Douglas into one county on October 16, 1862. The bill described the new boundaries and “decreed all taxes and public dues of whatever nature due for the inhabitants of Umpqua County shall be payable to the County of Douglas.” The act was to take effect from the first Monday in July 1863 on. It also repealed the act which created and organized Umpqua County. Douglas County had twice the population (3,234 to 1,250) and assessed valuation of Umpqua County.

Commissioner Hedden and Clerk Williams, and the other members of the court met for six days at the February session of the Umpqua Court at the Yoncalla Institute. Much county road, bridges, and other business was attended to.

A June 1863 special session and last meeting of the Umpqua County Court turned into a “housekeeping” session. The Clerk, Loren L. Williams, was ordered to “render a correct report to the Board of Douglas County at Roseburg at the next regular meeting.” The last entry in the Umpqua County Court Journal, written by Williams, stated, “There being no further business the court adjourned without day forever.” Umpqua County died July 6, 1863.



John Hedden

John N. Hedden, son of Cyrus and Margaret, returned from his attendance at the Portland Business School, from which he graduated in 1878, and went to work with his father in the mercantile business. He followed his chosen profession until his death in 1941.

Cyrus Hedden’s store handled everything from a pin to a threshing machine, and at times weighed gold dust as legal tender. Tons of grain and large amounts of wool were shipped through Hedden’s Store to San Francisco and other markets. The store was a general gathering place, and many issues and topics were thrashed out around the stove. The crowd often waited until eleven o’ clock at night for the old stagecoach to arrive from Drain with the mail.

Cyrus Hedden finally gave over the store to John, however, as a compliment to his father, John conducted the business under the name of C. Hedden until his father’s death.

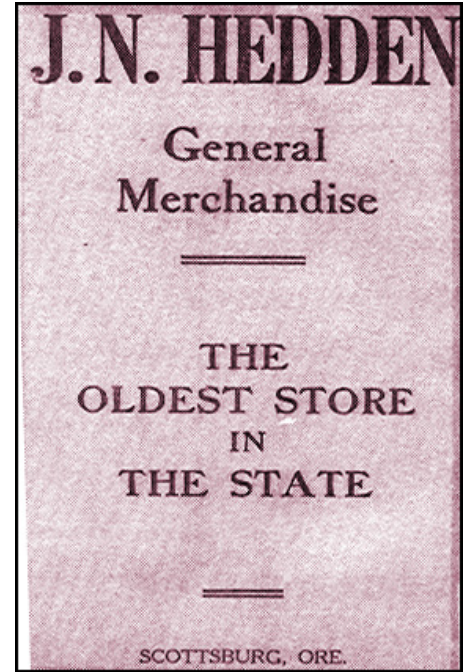
The business handled all lines of merchandise and in time had no competition in the valley. The business outfitted ranchers up and down the valley with clothing, food, and could get them the necessary farm implements.

Cyrus Hedden was a lifelong Republican. He was publicly spirited, giving generously to assist education and the progress of Douglas County. His repertoire was replete with tales of early Oregon and of Scottsburg. At the age of 91, Cyrus quietly passed from this earth on March 29, 1911, and the county lost one of its’ most honored and valued citizens. He was buried in the Scottsburg Pioneer Cemetery.



Hedden's second store in Scottsburg.

This is the second installment on the story of Cyrus Hedden and you can read more and see even more pictures by buying the UMPQUA TRAPPER. [Click here to find out how to get your back issue today!](#)



The Oldest Store in the State

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One Response to *Cyrus W. Hedden*



alycia havens-gilham says:

April 27, 2014 at 3:45 pm

I met the great great granddaughter to Cyrus Hedden yesterday. She told me of the history of Scottsburg, Levi Scott the founder and of Cyrus Hedden. She is the 5th generation to live in the Hedden house. Her name is Sunny and shes a very wonderful knowledgeable lady. The house is listed as a historical place and is also listed as an archeological sites. I really enjoyed chatting with her.

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