

Albert Tozier

Our County Through Time: Albert Tozier (1860-1937)

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As curator at Washington County Museum, whenever I begin training a new volunteer, the first thing I do is take them through our archive and talk about Albert Tozier. I love to tell Mr. Tozier's story because he had such an interesting life and was so thorough in his historical work. His collection of handmade scrapbooks, including letters, reminiscences, news articles, birth, death, and wedding notices, speeches, and histories, makes up the very first 26 boxes of our museum archive. Originally, he gave them to the county courthouse in 1933, but over time more and more people gave records and family collections and the courthouse basement began to overflow. Thus was the birth of our museum!

Albert Eugene Tozier was born in 1860 in Nebraska to Judge Charles True Tozier and his wife Zerilda Mayfield. The family came across the overland Oregon Trail to Hillsboro in 1863. Albert was the eldest of five, with one brother (Leroy) and three sisters, Rosella Tozier, Edith Weatherred, and Nellie Cox.

His father Charles served as county sheriff from 1872 to 1876, was elected the second mayor of Hillsboro a year later, and eventually served in the Oregon Legislature. His brother Leroy was known for going to Alaska during the gold rush of 1896 to 1899. He had a scandalous marriage to an apparent Vaudeville dancer, lost his mining business and eventually returned home to Portland.





Perhaps the closest family member to Albert was his younger sister, Edith Weatherred. Together they shared a love for Oregon history and both became journalists and editors, with part ownership in the Hillsboro Independent from 1885-1887. The brother and sister duo served tenure together at Champoeg State Park, showcasing artifacts, teaching the public and taking care of the collection at the museum there well into the 1930s.

Albert was first and foremost a newsman. He helped to found the National Editorial Association in 1885, acting as president for one year. He served as secretary of the Oregon Press Association as well, for almost fifteen years. However, his love of history eventually overtook his old profession and he spent his later years gathering artifacts and information about Washington County and Oregon.

Here at the museum, we are always coming across items with Albert's name attached to them. For example, we have records of the infamous murder of local farmer John Ledrick by a laborer named Gus Wachlin in 1893. After several years, Gus was hunted down by Sheriff William Bradford, dragged back to the county jail and held for trial. After being convicted and sentenced to hang, over 500 people from around the county showed up to see the rare execution. Albert Tozier was the editor of the Hillsboro Argus at the time and was able to secure an actual piece of the hanging rope itself, which he later attached to a photo of Gus Wachlin and donated with his collection.



The last picture ever taken of Albert Tozier (in 1936) was just a few months before he passed away. Albert was saddened because his health had become too poor to do his annual duty. For 64 years straight, he had rung the bell at Hillsboro Methodist Church on New Years, even coming all the way home from South America and New York on a couple of occasions.

We are so thankful to have Mr. Tozier's histories and writings in our archive. Not only do they keep history, but they are now a part of county history itself. They are a testament to the commitment of one man (and his beloved sister) to keeping and teaching local history. The

records are used in research to this very day and will continue to contribute to public education in Washington County for many years to come.

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