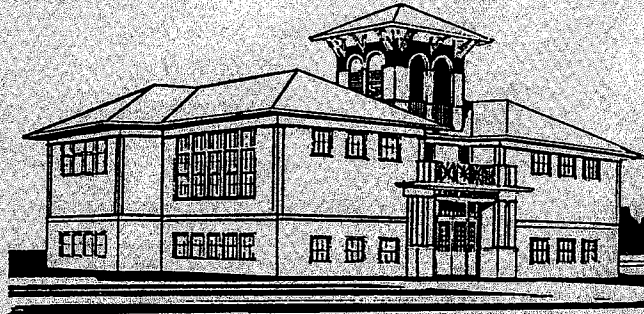


# LOOKING BACK

People and Places in the Early Keizer Area



*Line drawing by Don Gibster*

Keizer School – Center of the Early Community

Ann Lossner

HARRIET DEGUIRE  
1815 WINTER ST. NE.  
SALEM, OR. 97303

## Suie Lai Sun

The Zieber family did not use the graveyard, but had a plot miles away in the Pioneer Cemetery south of Salem where their daughter, Eugenia Zieber Bush, was buried. However, they and their descendants permitted access to the Smith Graveyard over their land, and around the turn of the century, dedicated the lane from Wheatland Road (then called River Road) to public use.

In 1950 when Nick Holoboff acquired the acreage on both sides of the lane, he discouraged use of the road. However, to insure the public's right of access, the trustees of the Claggett Cemetery decided to purchase the land necessary for a road and turn-around area.

On Memorial Day in 1954 Henry Beier stood at the gate and explained the problem to the families who came to honor their dead. He was able to raise the required \$1,100 to purchase 1.48 acres of land, including a 30-foot roadway from Nick and Mary Holoboff. In 1956 the Holoboffs and the Edward Bolfs, who had purchased land adjacent to the cemetery, donated to Marion County sufficient land to make the roadway 60 feet wide.

Josephine Bolf recalls that at the time they bought their land they found a wooden marker in the cemetery identifying the grave of an 18-year-old woman who had died in 1842. Bolfs speculated that she had died in childbirth. No wooden markers remain in the cemetery now.

In 1958 in response to a notice from Marion County that the private cemetery would be assessed for taxes, a nonprofit corporation was formed with Orel Garner, Henry Beier, Delbert Bair, and Bob Massey as the Board of Directors, and Fanny McCall as the Board's secretary.

To clear up the name, on May 22, 1962, Robert Massey, Rosa Cole, Sam West, Delbert Bair, and Henry Beier, as trustees for the Claggett Cemetery Association, paid \$10 for a bargain and sale deed to the Smith Graveyard and Claggett Cemetery Association.

Many of the early families in the community used the burial ground: Garners, Pughs, Masseys, McNarys, La-Follettes, Savages, Harolds, Bales, Hammacks, Bairs, Reeds, Northcutts, and others. They did the necessary digging, buried their dead, and maintained the plots. But when Henry Beier agreed to mow the grass for Memorial Day in 1952, he didn't realize what he was getting into. For the next 26 years he helped the other trustees mow the grass, but he also dug the graves and maintained the records as the official, but unpaid, caretaker of the cemetery.

In 1978 funds were made available for hiring the mowing of the cemetery, but Henry Beier can still be found in Claggett Cemetery digging the graves, precisely and painstakingly by hand, and stopping in his labor to discuss plots or the cemetery's history with anyone who expresses an interest.

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Several Chinese operated hop ranches or farms in Keizer. Among them were Hop Lee, Sid Beck, Lee Hing, Jing Sun, Jing Yee, and Jing Guy, but the one who contributed most to the development of Keizer is probably Suie Lai Sun.

If he had it to do over again, Suie Sun says that he would stay in school and get an education. As it was, Suie quit school after he completed the fifth grade because he was already richer than any of his friends and didn't see how he could benefit from any further education.

Suie was the third of eight children born to George and Leong She Sun. The others were Yee, Woo, Mary, Esther, Bessie, Hem and Maxine. When Suie was born in 1894 the family was living on Ferry Street between Liberty and Commercial. Later they moved to a home on State St. in the same block.

George Sun's first store was located where the Ben Franklin Bank is now at State and High and later moved to the corner of Ferry and High.

Sun sold coffee, tea, candy, and tobacco. Behind the shop portion was a large room which was used by Chinese out-of-town visitors as a card room and dormitory. A favorite game was dominoes. George Sun also acted as a banker for the older Chinese who didn't trust banks; he had a reputation for astuteness and absolute honesty.

George Sun had come from China in 1868 when he was 16 years old. Like other young Chinese, he saved his money and when he had several hundred dollars, he took it back to his family, usually traveling by steerage for only \$75. On his second trip to the old country he married Leong She Sun and brought her back to Salem.

Suie was attending Big Central School on Church and Marion when he dropped out; he had completed the lower grades at Little Central on High and Marion.

When Suie started school, he wore his hair in a queue, but the boy behind him kept pulling it. Suie's parents decided that in keeping with the times and local customs, they would permit all three boys to have their queues cut off.

Suie's brothers and sisters did not share his views on education. Yee completed the 9th grade, and all the girls graduated from high school. Woo was the first Chinese graduate of the University of Oregon, majoring in Engineering. However, after graduation he became interested in insurance.

He went into business in Portland and for several years, served as mayor of Chinatown. Hem was valedictorian of his class at Willamette University and went to work for Texaco, part of the time in China.

When he quit school, Suie's income was ten cents a day. That doesn't sound like much money until it is compared with the price of bread at that time—5 cents a loaf or six loaves for 25 cents. Suie made his money by selling the Oregon Statesman for 5 cents and retaining 2 cents commission. He considered buying a coin purse in which to keep his money, but

decided not to waste the 15 cents. Instead he tied his money into a corner of his bandanna handkerchief.

Suie started in the newspaper business when he was 8. Before that he was selling beer bottles and worn rubber boots to a junk dealer. Suie got his first full-time job when the young dishwasher at the nearby Salem Hotel became ill and Suie filled in for him for the princely sum of \$5 a week. He was a fast worker, and in his spare time, learned to cook.

His next job was around the corner at the Douglas Confectionery. It was his responsibility to chop the firewood, start the fire, wash the dishes, and after the owner swept the floor, Suie mopped it daily. When he would get caught up with his work, he would get lessons in candy-making. Again his pay was \$5 a week, but he also got six pieces of candy which he shared with his mother and sisters.

Later Suie joined other Chinese boys who worked as farm laborers. His first job was on the Krebs Bros. 225-acre hop ranch on Brooklake Road where Steamerland is now. About 20 young Chinese lived in a large house on the ranch.

The Oregon Electric Railroad tracks had just been completed as far as Hopmere and on Saturday night the young Chinese would ride the train directly into Chinatown, visit with their families, and return on Sunday night. The fare was 10 cents each way.

When a market developed for fresh vegetables, the Suns rented part of the McNary-Stoltz farm and grew cabbage and cucumbers for the Stoltz cannery where pickles, kraut and vinegar were made. They also grew table vegetables for Weller Bros. on Commercial Street.

Suie, who was about 14 then, would get up at 3 a. m., curry and prepare the horses, and load the vegetables which had been washed and bunched the day before. Then he would clean himself up and make the two-hour trip over gravel roads into Salem. Deliveries had to be made by 6 a. m. Others would also be making early morning deliveries. Among them was Ernie Schindler, bringing in dairy products. Ernie later hired Hans (Curly) Hofstetter, who founded Curly's Dairy.

One day after Suie had delivered his produce to Stoltz, Gideon Stoltz beckoned him aside and offered him a sample of the new Stoltz product—soda pop. Suie's eyes still sparkle when he tells that he was allowed to drink all he wanted—two whole bottles!

After his brother heard about the unexpected treat, he decided that Suie needed help with the deliveries. Then both boys would enjoy two free bottles of pop apiece.

Sometimes there was no time to have breakfast in the morning before coming to town with the vegetables, so Suie would eat afterwards at the White House restaurant on State St. near the Ladd and Bush Bank. For 35 cents he would get a slice of ham, two eggs, three pieces of toast, fried potatoes, and coffee or tea.

The Suns later sold vegetables to other markets in Salem. About Wednesday the boys would be told what specials the grocer wanted to run on Saturday. This meant he would want a larger order, also that he would want the vegetables at a lower price. The Suns regularly sold the carrots, beets, green onions, and radishes at three bunches for ten cents (five carrots

or beets to the bunch). The grocer resold them at 5 cents a bunch.

Yee, Woo, and Suie lived in a small shack on the McNary farm, just under the bluff. There was no well, so, using a shoulder yoke and buckets, they carried water from a spring to fill barrels for cooking and watering the horses. The vegetables were washed in Grierson (Claggett) Creek. Their work was greatly eased when they made enough money one summer to pay for a well and their father had a man come out from town to dig it.

About 1911-12 the Suns rented 50 more acres of the McNary-Stoltz farm and put the land into hops. Mary, Esther, and Bessie Sun came out from town to help the neighbors with the picking.

When McNary and Stoltz decided to put the McNary farm into orchards, the George Sun Corp. (of which Suie was a member) took a ten-year lease on 40 acres south of the McNary farm owned by the Janisches of Portland. This is about where the McNary Oaks mobile home park is now.

There was a large old house there and members of the Chinese Corp., including Yee and his new wife, lived there. Yee had gone back to China to get a bride, as many of the young Chinese men did. This was not an arranged marriage. Rather, he had inquired about a likely prospect, then went to China to meet her. Ho Suie Sun was a beautiful girl. In later years she worked for a Portland furrier and doubled as a model. Ho and Yee were married in China and Yee made the family a gift of \$2,000.

During the winter months when there was little to do on the farm, Suie hauled gravel in his farm wagon at \$4.50 a day. That was really making money, he says.

When Suie was ready to marry, after some discussion, he and his parents agreed upon Myrtle Wong of Portland. The wedding on January 9, 1918, was a formal affair at the old Portland Hotel. Both Suie and Myrtle were 23 years old.

Suie brought his wife to Salem and the young couple moved in with the Sun family, which was then living in the beautiful, large house at the west end of Union Street (now known as the Gilbert house) while they built a small house on the Janisch farm. The Chinese had already built a vegetable packing shed and barn on the property.

When the house was ready, Suie and Myrtle and their daughter, Lorraine, moved into it. The boys, Don and Chugh, were born there. Then Suie and his wife purchased 20 acres from Wilbur Weeks just north of the poor farm which was on Front Street, near Tryon. Sue put it all into vegetables and berries. A small house on that farm was their home while they built a larger one.

This property was on the south end of Keizer and the three children walked all the way to Keizer School unless it was raining too hard. Then their father would take them in the only family vehicle, the farm truck.

Suie also rented land for a hop yard in West Salem. Little Don was watering a bull there when the animal attacked him and the boy died of injuries.

During World War II the Suns rented their house to Victor Keefer and moved to Portland to work in the shipyards, Suie as a mechanic, and Myrtle as a riveter.

Suie came to Salem on weekends to work the farm. It occurred to him that if he would put in a peach orchard, it would be bearing by the time the Suns moved back to Salem. He ordered the trees one weekend, the next, he hired two men, and with them planted the area where the Fred Meyer store is now, in peaches.

After the war the Suns stayed in Portland for a few more years. Suie worked as a cook at the Waverly Country Club. Myrtle was employed first by Jantzen Mills, then by Lipman's.

In 1947 while they were still in Portland, they accepted an offer for the land which lies north of Broadway.

The peach trees were indeed producing a good crop when the Suns returned to Salem. They farmed the land for a number of years. Then in 1961 they sold their orchard to the State Finance Company. Liberty Street and Broadway were extended through the Sun property to River Road. The Sun home was moved to 4th Street and the Fred Meyer store was erected in 1968.

Before they left the orchard the Suns built themselves a house on a double lot on Delight. Over the years the large backyard was planted to vegetables, flowers, berries, and fruit trees.

Myrtle Sun died on Thanksgiving Day, 1979; their daughter Lorraine, had died in 1978. She had married and lived in Portland where she had been employed by Nordstrom's.

Chugh graduated from Oregon State University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He and his family now live in Jackson, Miss.

*Published March 21, 1988*

## **Suie Sun Recalls A Chinese Memorial Day**

April 5 is Chinese Memorial Day. For Suie Sun it brings back boyhood memories of a time when the day was observed by the Chinese community with special ceremonies.

About a week before the Day, stores owned by Chinese would receive a small account book which they placed in their windows. Chinese passersby would notice it and go into the store to sign up for a donation.

The money collected was used to purchase food, drink, special papers, Chinese candles, and sticks of punk. (Punk was a special preparation that would smolder without flame. It was made into sticks resembling miniature cattails and was often used to touch off fireworks.)

The food was prepared the day before, and on the morning of Memorial Day, a delivery wagon and horse and driver were hired to carry the food and men to the cemetery. Anywhere from 3 to 8 men would go.

If a Chinese boy wanted to impress his friends, he would go by street car, paying the 5 cent fare, and join the group at the Odd Fellows (now Pioneer) cemetery, which at the turn of the century was far outside the city.

In the Chinese section there was a large slab, raised to make a table. At the back was a raised portion filled with dirt; next to it was an open oven.

The Chinese candles, which were short and slim—about the size of a man's finger—were lighted, together with the sticks of punk, and set into the dirt.

Then the men knelt and recited prayers for the dead. Rising, they folded each specially shaped paper around a narrow strip of paper in an intricate manner, bowed three times, lighted the paper from the candles, bowed again, and tossed the burning paper into the oven.

This was repeated until there was a blazing fire. The papers represented cloth for the departed spirits to use in making clothing. When the fire was hot enough, needles and thread were thrown in too.

The Chinese whisky was poured into tiny glasses and placed between the sticks of punk. The hardboiled eggs, the barbecued pork, boiled chicken, pots of tea, and bottles of rice wine were placed on the table and dedicated to the dead. When the ceremony was concluded, some bits of food were scattered around the cemetery to appease the devil or evil spirits.

The food was now considered sacred. Those who wished could eat their portions there, but generally, they all returned to town to the store designated as the headquarters for Memorial Day. There the men cut up the meat, divided up the hardboiled eggs, tea, wine and whisky, and took them to the participating stores, apportioning the amount of food to the amount of money collected by the store.

Those who contributed would come to partake. Although everyone could have all he wanted to eat, each was guided by his conscience, and there was always plenty.

The ceremonial table is no longer at the Pioneer Cemetery, although there are a few Chinese graves there. Suie explains that several years after internment, the bones of most of those who were from the old country were returned to china for reburial with their families. There is no obligation to return those who were born here; many Chinese from Salem are buried in Portland, as are Suie's parents, George and Leong She Sun.

There will be no ceremony on April 5 in Salem this year; the colorful tradition has faded into Salem's history.

*Published March 28, 1980*



Hop Lee tombstone

## The History of the Frogley House

No one knows the exact age of the big, square blue house on Windsor Island Road. Although it was undoubtedly built during the Victorian era, there is no typical gingerbread trim or turret. It seems to belong to no particular style of architecture. The exterior is plain and sturdy-looking, but the interior is spacious and functional.

For over 50 years the house was home to the Frogley family. Alfred Frogley, his wife, Minnie, and their children, Bessie and Obed, came from Minnesota to Keizer in 1902 with Minnie's parents, Obed and Lucretia Gaines. From F. (Ferdinand (?)) and Pauline Levy, (pro. Levi), Gaines purchased almost 239 acres and the house which had such a thick growth of moss on its roof that he considered it to an "old, old" house.

When Anna Harold Beaty was born there in 1890 it was referred to as "the old Levy house."

James Smart, holder of the donation land claim on which the farm is located, came from England to Oregon in 1850. He married in 1851 and laid claim to 619 acres (variously recorded as 630 and 642.28 acres). He must have settled his claim by 1853 as all claims in the Keizer area were settled by the end of that year.

On February 5, 1863, James and Nancy Smart sold 620 acres to John R. and Jane E. Starkey. No land transactions are recorded for the tract until October 4, 1875, when J. W. and Mary C. Fisher sold 234 acres to A. A. and E. T. Glisan. Glisans sold 467 acres to F. and Pauline Levy, who in turn, sold 238.93 acres to Obed Gaines July 28, 1902.

It is difficult to determine whether the unknown owner(s) or Glisans or Fishers built the house, which is indicated on a map in the Marion and Linn County Atlas of 1878. It may be as old or older than the one built about 1875 on Verda Lane by John Pugh, DLC holder, and now occupied by Rosalie Herber. The Pugh house is generally considered to be the oldest house in Keizer.

Minnie Frogley inherited the farm in 1907 during a series of deaths in the family. Her mother died in 1904, her husband in 1908, and her father in 1910 after a lengthy illness. From then on, Obed, who was only 14 years old, helped his mother operate the farm, which extended from Spong's Landing Road (now Windsor Island Road) to the Willamette River.

When Obed married Edna Hoffman in 1916 he brought his bride into the family home. The young couple raised two daughters there, Arleen (Olson) and Zilla (Schooley).

When the Frogleys moved into the house there were four roomy bedrooms/upstairs, with ceilings approximately 9-1/2 feet high. The six rooms downstairs all had 10-foot ceilings. The big kitchen extended the width of the house from east to west. Off the kitchen were a large washroom-pantry and a fruit room.

There were two front entrances, one to the kitchen and living/dining room from a recessed covered porch and the other to the front hall from a covered extended porch. That