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Some Reflections on Mirror Pond

With all the discussion lately about the future of Bend's Mirror Pond, I am reminded of some aspects of its origins and my family's stories of its past. The thinking about whether or not to preserve the "pond" or restore the wilder river has presented many justified values to consider. The pond is certainly central to the recreational tradition, aesthetics and community spirit of Bend, past and present. In full disclosure, my grandfather, Dr. J.F. Hosch—for better or worse—started the "reclamation" of that inside bend in the river in the 1920s. The following is some information relating to the pond and the shoreline area known, curiously, in recent years as "Coyner Point."

Photos at the historical society from about 1905 show that particular part of the untouched river's edge as a swampy tangle of brush. That marshy "backwater" aspect was likely pronounced by the downstream damming of the river in 1910, and by the 1920s, there was still no groomed shoreline at the inside curve of the river to match the other civilizing changes along the banks. In those days such an "eyesore" was a wide-open invitation to "improvement." Grandpa, then a practicing MD in Bend and Redmond and an irrepressible gardener, saw the potential and purchased the "uninhabitable" property. He then began the process of reclaiming more than a half-acre of land, gradually sculpting about 600' of shoreline just across from Drake Park.

As the account goes, Grandpa traded doctor services for 3500 wagonloads of fill, and established a broad expanse of lawn and gardens with views of Drake Park, The Pilot Butte Inn and the life of the river. He planted willows along the bank, and according to a feature article in *The Sunday Oregonian* of 11/24/1935, Grandpa carefully anchored the project on Mirror Pond with many native, high desert plantings. From those years living at that point in the river, one story in particular was an often retold staple in my mother's memory, and adds to the role of Mirror Pond for paddlers and towns-people in Bend's past.

Even in those days, Bend was a stop on the circuit of world-class speakers and entertainers. Those Chautauqua events were high-points for Central Oregonians, not far beyond the rough and ready days of the high desert frontier. One such tour celebrity was the renowned actress and burlesque dancer, Sally Rand, famous for her "fan dance," "balloon bubble dance" and other arguably scandalous activities. As the story goes, on a Sunday morning, my mother, then in her early teens, was asked to show Miss Rand the scenic views of Bend along Mirror Pond and the river in her canoe. After considerable urging she finally agreed to the outing.

It was a sunny morning and Miss Rand was reportedly delighted for the chance to enjoy some leisure time in her performance schedule. Mother, however, was not

especially enthused by her chore, and though she loved to canoe the river, this—as she told it years later—was a daunting task for a shy, self-conscious teen. With Miss Rand reclined in the bow, and Mother, paddling dutifully in the stern, the morning went on as they toured, slowly, the charming river views.

The stream banks began to fill with onlookers eager to glimpse the notorious burlesque star in a canoe piloted by the doctor's uneasy daughter. Aware of the growing spectacle, Mother soon suggested that Miss Rand might be ready to go back to her lodgings for a rest. However, Miss Rand, now warming in the sun, said, "Oh no, my dear, this is *wonderful*." Then to Mother's teenage mortification, Miss Rand stripped to the waist and stretched out still further to sunbathe. Mother, as stunned gondolier, was never to forget that morning, or shake off the town's memory of Dr. Hosch's daughter, charged with parading the infamous, half-naked Fan Dancer, Miss Sally Rand, one sunny morning on picturesque Mirror Pond.