



FRIENDS OF HISTORIC
FOREST GROVE

GRAVE MATTERS CEMETERY TOUR 2017

Editor's note: FHFG presented Grave Matters Cemetery Tour on October 7, 2017. During this tour, actors – dressed in attire from the era – portray former Forest Grove area residents. FHFG and the author of this script retains all rights to this script. Written permission is required for using any parts of this script.



John Elkin Bailey, Bank Vice President

1845 - 1936

Portrayed by Tom Cook

Script written by: Skip Buhler

“Most of you may recognize me as Vice President of the Forest Grove bank, but for the majority of my life I was a farmer and I still see myself as such. Growing up in Indiana and Iowa, and working on my father’s tobacco and hay farms, I developed early on a deep care for the farmer’s struggle, for the farming family’s need and for the potential for plight and financial ruin. I worried about that in my younger years, and so when I graduated from the Knoxville Academy in Iowa, I set out to teach and leave farming behind. That was my plan once I arrived in Oregon, and I was a schoolmaster for a number of years, but the farming life called to me. I began farming in the Forest Grove area around 1877, working with my father-in-law Mr. Shipley on the A.T. Smith farm for roughly a decade, and we were one of the leading hay producers in the State. In 1888, I quit farming to serve as Station agent for Southern Pacific...

I was so occupied until 1890 when I opened my mercantile on Main Street with my brother-in-law and partner Edward Haines, and there I gained a greater understanding of the needs of the farmer. At the mercantile we sold clothing of all types, and other dry goods such as Hay seed. Through my work in the store, I became convinced of the need for a City Bank that looked out for the farmer. Here in the Willamette Valley we live in an agricultural paradise, but farmers still need a helping hand now and then, and that became my goal. I joined together with a few of my colleagues in 1907, and we joined our assets and opened the Forest Grove National Bank with \$25,000 in capital. The bank has gone through several incarnations, but is still functioning on the corner of Pacific and Main. I was on the loan committee, so was often deciding whether someone would succeed or not, and that can wear on your mind.

Somehow the bank kept me on as Vice President while I was called upon to take a more active role in City affairs, when I sought to take away the frightening uncertainty from the lives of those living in the Grove. I wanted the college students to gain a significant education, so I joined the board of Trustees at Pacific, and hopefully helped bring about necessary change in the faculty and the curriculum. I also served on the City Council briefly. I probably took on too much, because I soon felt exhausted...I decided I’d better retire and spend some time with my wife and children before the cobwebs set in.

I've been called "the pioneer merchant of Forest Grove," for bringing to town modern methods of merchandising. I don't know if it was anything too novel, but I had an attractive and pleasing store, the customers always complimenting on the arrangement, and the ease in finding what they sought after. Apparently I set the path for future generations of shop owners in the area.

I spend most of my free moments bicycling with Mrs. Bailey and our friends...I believe Bicycling is a salve for the soul. Mrs. Bailey has been a godsend to me, and very willing to join me in my hobbies. I was introduced to Ella Luck in Milwaukee WI, while visiting family friends after my first wife died, and by coincidence Ella was a cousin of my first wife Minnie Shipley...Ella returned to Forest Grove with me, and brought her parents with us, to live in our home. I couldn't ask for better In-laws, and helped to keep me in top health. Ella has been my good luck charm. My wife was the main librarian for many years, working side by side with Mrs. Rogers, and helped found the library in 1911...Our family has done much to keep the library a growing public concern and a restful relaxing location. Mrs. Bailey attends the Christian Science church, but I am more comfortable spending the Sabbath mornings at the Congregational Church where most of my business partners can be found that day.

Well, that's enough about me. I hope you enjoy your time here in the Grove. Watch your step.

(I died at home, at 11:45, exactly five months, less 15 minutes, from the time of Ella's death. I had been ill eleven weeks, with awful pain.)

John's Timeline

1845 – J. E. Bailey was born on 11-4-1845, to Eleanor A. and John BAILEY, in Greencastle, IN. Father was a tobacco farmer, or "tobacconist" according to census.

1855 – Moved with parents to Knoxville, Iowa. Spent a little time in Kansas, then moved back to Iowa in 1861.

1872 – sometime around this time, J.E. graduated from Knoxville Academy, Knoxville, IA. He taught school in Iowa briefly, before moving to Oregon in 1873. (Knoxville Academy was organized in 1872)

1873 – J.E. moved to Hillsboro, OR, apparently with his mother Eleanor A. BAILEY. He taught at Shute School and at Cornelius School.

1875 – J.E. moves to Forest Grove, and taught school until 1877 (so two years), before going back into farming. He seems to have been primarily a hay farmer, clover, and hay types. Working with Manley Shipley.

1877 – J.E. married Minnie L. (Smith) Shipley, both from Forest Grove, on Feb. 15, 1877. Rev. Horace Lyman officiating.

From 1877 to about 1887, John farmed the old A.T. Smith farm. (Shipley and Haines were government hay contractors)

1878 – their daughter Mary is born, on June 14, 1878, in Forest Grove.

1880 – about this time, their only son passes away at age of 3.

1888 – J.E. is named Southern Pacific Railroad station agent.

1890 – wife Minnie L. Shipley dies.

1890 – With partner E. W. Haines, John starts a mercantile on Main Street. Operating as Haines and Bailey for 5 years, at which point Bailey bought Haines' interest. Opened til 1917.

1892 – J.E. buys the property that will later become BAILEY'S ADDITION. By 1909, J.E. also owns all of Block 32.

1893 – J.E. goes back east and meets and marries his second wife, Ella LUCK, in Milwaukee, WI. Ella is a cousin of his first wife Minnie. Wed on May 16.

1898 – April. Eleanor A Bailey, John's mom, dies.

1902 – Ella's mom Mary C. Luck dies.

1906 – On Feb. 16, John and Ella file on the BAILEY'S ADDITION (located SE of SOUTH PARK ADD), it consists of 3 blocks.

1906 – daughter Mary marries William Dexter Clark(e), of Eureka, CA, on April 18, 1906.

1906 – late in the year, J.E. meets with Thornburgh, Todd, Fuqua, and Haines “around a wood-burning stove in the back of Bailey’s Dry Goods store. Among them they had \$12,000 to invest.” Fuqua owned the bank corner, but while it was being built, the bank operations would be carried out in the Johnson Millinery Building

1907 – J.E. helps to found the Forest Grove National Bank, on 2-11-1907, and becomes its Vice President. (the bank officially opened on March 4, 1907)...The same year, John buys out his partner Haines’s share of the mercantile store. The bank opened at a time of financial uncertainty. The Panic of 1907.

1908 – In August, as part of committee of 9 community leaders, J.E. helped to write Forest Grove’s new City Charter, which was voted on January 1909. The new charter saw municipal improvements, most obvious of which was the new water system.

19-teens – J.E. continued to run his mercantile store, advertised as having “the most complete stock of clothing in Washington County.” J.E. was called “the pioneer merchant of Forest Grove,” bringing to Forest Grove modern methods of merchandising.

1909 – ex-partner Haines leaves FG for healthier climes.

1909 – J.E. is elected to PU board of trustees, to fill the late Alanson Hinman’s seat, on 6-15-1909. Spent many years on the Board, during the 20s, making significant decisions, like firing a PU president...

1911 – wife Ella helps Mrs. Rogers establish the City Library.

1913 – wife Ella’s parents James and Mary C. (Nye) LUCK are living in the Bailey house, since ca 1893 (according to Mary Luck’s obit, 10-9-1902). James Luck dies 4-10-13.

1916 – On 9-28-1916, J.E. was in an automobile accident while in Portland. He cut his hand. He had recently sold the car to the driver, apparently.

1917 – After 27 years in business in the same Main St location, John retires from the Mercantile. He sold the mercantile to Sommers & Gettlemen of Portland.

1918 – J.E. retires from “active business.”

1936 – wife Ella (Anna) Mary Luck BAILEY dies at home, 1-14-1936.

1936 – John Elkin BAILEY dies, June 15, 1936. At home, at 11:45 am, “exactly five months, less than 15 minutes, from the time of Ella’s death.” He was “a man of clear vision and of remarkable qualities,” at age 90. Before his recent ill health, he had served as the bank vice president. As such he was on the loan committee, and spent only one year as Bank cashier.

1962 – daughter Mary Bailey CLARK dies in 1962. (January 24, 1964, Tacoma WA))