
Hugo's Survivors

Most folks from Hugo would pick hops to help survive. Hops had a long tradition in Josephine County starting in 1875.

1930 Browns¹ The Brown and McKy families, and Hana Thomas used to go down to the Fred Robinson's and Stevenson's hop yards and pick hops during late fall. They sometimes would camp there during the picking season. The kids would make less than a dollar a day, perhaps a penny a pound. Some of the Robinson hops were those floppy hops that did not weigh much. The only way some people got away with it was to slip a few rocks into the sacks before they were weighed.

Picking Hops: 1935 - 1941 The Olson and Decker family did it in the 1930s - 1940s.² The family picked hops for six or seven years to supplement the family income until Beatrice was in her junior year of high school. This was when hops were picked one at a time, or two or three together, and placed in baskets. In the field the hops were emptied from the baskets into a big bag and weighed. Stripping the hops from the vines did not help because leaves were usually added to the picked hops. The field foreman would give you the "Dickens" if he looked into your bag and there were too many leaves.

Every day for about three weeks in August and September, just before school started, Mother Josephine Decker, Grandfather John Olson, Uncle Ernie Olson, Aunt Erma Olson, brother Douglas, and Beatrice all picked hops on Lower River Road by Robertson Bridge for the Stevensons and Robertsons. Each morning they got up early and traveled to the hop yards in a 1927 Cheverolet that Beatrice's grandfather had bought. They picked as soon as they could see the hops until late afternoon, perhaps 5:00 p.m. or so.

Picking Hops

Olson and Decker Family (continued) Every day for about three weeks in August and September, just before school started, Mother Josephine Decker, Grandfather John Olson, Uncle Ernie Olson, Aunt Erma Olson, brother Douglas, and Beatrice all picked hops on Lower River Road by Robertson Bridge for the Stevensons and Robertsons. Each morning they got up early and traveled to the hop yards in a 1927 Cheverolet that Beatrice's grandfather had bought. They picked as soon as they could see the hops until late afternoon, perhaps 5:00 p.m. or so.

Grandmother Josephine Olson packed lunches which the family would eat in the field under the shade of the hops or nearby trees. It never seemed to fail that there would be a thunder and lighting storm and they would all have to run out from under the vines. The downpour would usually end the picking for the day because the hops would be too wet. However, then the hops would have to be picked quickly after that because they could get moldy.

Beatrice and Douglas "Gene" picked hops together and weighed their hops separately from the rest of the family. On a good day they picked about 200 pounds of hops for which they were paid ½ cent to 1 cent a pound. They bought school clothes with their "saved" hop money.

Beatrice did not like hop picking. What kid wanted to get up early each day and have hop vines scratch your arms, but at the end of the day you could go home to your grandmother where she had dinner waiting.

"Making Due"

1950s - 1960s Mike Walker worked in the hop yards in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He worked for the Lathrops. The season almost always was 21 days just before high school started. They were 12 hour shift, including two 30 minute breaks, and an hour for lunch. Lunch had a new meaning for Mike as his shifts were grave yard from 6:00 p.m. in the evening to 6:00 a.m. in the morning.

The first two years he worked in the fields. The first year he was a vine cutter using a machete to cut the vines near the ground. The next year he worked in the "Crows Nest" which was a platform above the ground on a tractor near the lines that held up the hop vines. Again he was using a machete, but this time to disconnect the vines from the high wire. The last year he was at the Lathrop hop plant where he worked as a hop yard puller taking the vines off a chain and attaching them to the hop remover machine. [Research.](#)

The first year an older buddy drove him to work, and when the shift was done he wanted to have breakfast at the Rogue Café. Breakfast was normal, but Mike was 15 years old and had not started drinking coffee. He would have a coco cola to the bemusement of the other patrons.

Want more information? Contact an officer of the *Hugo Neighborhood* on how you can become involved in your community's history and land use.

1. Hugo Neighborhood. 2000. *Carrol E. Brown's Hugo Memories: 1916 - 2000.* Hugo, OR.

2. Hugo Neighborhood. 2001. *Draft - Beatrice June (Decker) Bentson's Hugo Memories: 1924 - 2001.* Hugo, OR.

Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society's Mission

This information brochure is one of a series of documents published by the Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (*Hugo Neighborhood*). It is designed to be shared with neighbors for the purpose of helping protect our rural quality of life by promoting an informed citizenry in decision-making. The *Hugo Neighborhood* is an informal nonprofit charitable and educational organization with a land use and history mission of promoting the social welfare of its neighbors.

Land Use & History

The *Hugo Neighborhood's* land use mission is to promote Oregon Statewide Goal 1 — Citizen Involvement, and to preserve, protect, and enhance the livability and economic viability of its farms, forests, and rural neighbors. It will act, if requested, as a technical resource assisting neighbors to represent themselves.

Its history mission is to educate, collect, preserve, interpret, and research its local history and to encourage public interest in the history of the Hugo area.

Volunteer membership dues are \$10.00 annually per family and normally used for paper, ink, envelopes, publications and mailings. Send us your e-mail address if you want to know what we are doing.

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Not Quality Controlled, Nor Edited

**July 20, 1933, Grants Pass Daily Courier article on the
subject of hops in Josephine County to research.**

HUGO' HOP PICKERS



Very Draft
Brochure 192 Of Hugo's Early
Settler Brochure Series



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**Hugo Neighborhood Association &
Historical Society**