

*Nettie Connett  
A Lady In Loggers  
Clothing*

*Nettie is pictured here with a  
bobcat she shot.*

Story by David Nelson  
Sandy Historical Society, Inc.  
January 17, 2019



“Whatever they say about me is so!” ~Nettie Connett

What drives a diminutive, clever woman to live and dress as a man in a time when women all wore dresses and focused primarily on running their homes? In the sparsely populated area of Aims, Oregon, Nettie Connett and her son lived in a log cabin built by Connett (she had to rebuild it twice after fires). Married briefly; She sent him packing because he didn't know how to treat a lady.

There are numerous tales, some of mythic proportion, of Connett as a blustering, acid-tongued she-man, doing a headstand for drinks in her favorite bar (one of the last times she was seen doing this acrobatic feat was at age 77). By the way, she was performing on a bar stool which requires an amazing amount of dexterity and balance.

How many people do most of us know with the will to live as they please in the face of societal rejection? Who has the personal strength to confront life with steely determination to carve out their niche in spite of tremendous odds against succeeding? Not many, male or female, have the confidence to face every pitfall as a temporary obstacle, which leads to ultimate victory. Who among us begin as a waitress, ride that road to a cook which is parlayed into owning a restaurant and hotel. When faced with the question, “Can you do this?” Her answers were consistently the same, “Yes! I can.”

We humans are a curious lot when it comes to eccentric people. Universally, we don't like them too much. Well, “don't like” may be a bit strong. More like, they make us feel uncomfortable and self-

conscious. “Why can’t they be more like normal people” we conjecture (actually we are asking ourselves, why can’t they be more like me)? Instead of admiring their determination and unique approach to life, we find fault with the way they dress or how they make a living; as though our lives would pass the same detailed scrutiny.

Need medical help? Let her know and she will either pay for the care or take you to a doctor (and pay the bill). If she heard you ran short of groceries, she’d drive her Studebaker truck (taking up most of the road, some would say) to the grocery store, or into the woods, looking for your four-footed food. Because she was an expert shot, you’d find a deer carcass on your porch in the morning. Have you ever been in a serious financial bind and run out of food? Desperation sets in. Fear soon follows. You have no solution, No hope. Hunger gnaws. Nettie loved solving these real-life problems, bringing viable solutions to desperate situations.

Imagine the plight of a young college student whose funds are drying up and her family cannot step in, they don’t have the funds. Nettie hears about it and pays the remainder of the year’s tuition plus thousands more to finish her degree.

So what are we saying here? Is Nettie Connett found wanting on the scales of life because she drank too much, stood on her head on bar stools, dressed like a man, chewed tobacco and cussed a blue streak? Or are we saying she did not live as she should have according to our rules of how everyone should behave (But wait, I think it is God who has the final say about our lives, based on entirely different criteria).

Nettie Connett lived life on her own terms, as far as anyone knew. And her outward, brash, eccentricities painted her with a negative brush, a woman who lived like a gruff, crude man. And most of us love hearing those improbable tales with raised eyebrows and clicking tongues. But what of her generosity? Do we give as much credit for her loving care, filling the many needs that came across her life as we look askance at her logger, beer drinking tales?

Nettie Connett may not have been voted the most likely to win friends and influence people but out of a hard-lived life with curious choices came an anonymously generous woman who understood that we all need help from time to time.