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To: Julie L. Sigall
Associate Register for Policy & International Affairs

Date: 03/04/2005

From: Cheri Dohnal

Comment:

It would be fabulous if we can get the problem with orphan works fixed or at least minimized through passage of some special legislation! As the author of a historical book ("Columbia River Gorge: Natural Treasure on the Old Oregon Trail," - Arcadia, 2003), the trouble I ran into with orphan works not only kept me from using valuable materials in that book, but has discouraged me from attempting to get other history-related manuscripts published in the future. I was so frustrated by my inability to obtain necessary permissions that I simply don't want to go through the trouble of taking another historical book to press!

Additionally, I am the U.S. GenWeb County Coordinator for Wasco County, Oregon and am regularly frustrated in my attempts to put valuable information online for benefit of researchers. Over a period of years I've become tired of trying to chase down the original copyright holders of documents and photos that I'd like to put online, and again this has caused me to lose enthusiasm for several special projects. When others have attempted to contribute to the Wasco County site, I've had to turn away several potential contributions because I don't have the time to play "copyright police" in hopes of chasing down the heirs of the original author. So much valuable information is lost to researchers simply because I can't afford to be sued over a possible copyright violation for posting an item to a no-fee, volunteer-staffed web site.

If I can be of any assistance by providing detailed testimony for upcoming hearings on this matter, please don't hesitate to contact me. Orphan works became a more serious problem and a dreadful impediment to researchers when the most recent copyright law changes were made. I would be pleased to participate in the process of making the new laws more reasonable for all researchers.