

The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

February 2005

Elaine Rohse on Secrets of Yamhill County

At our January meeting, Elaine Rohse gave attendees a whirlwind tour of dozens of secrets of our county. She began not with a local gold rush, but with a coal mining endeavor, which began in the 1890s and prospered until 1904, when a pile of tailings caught fire and the mine was allowed to burn uncontrolled. Next, Elaine discussed another get-rich scheme—St. Joseph, which started in 1872 as a railroad depot and townsite of 74 blocks containing 10 lots per block. She also spoke of Olive Merry Johnsons' recollections of finding old water wells, and oil slicks where they changed the engines oil, the site of the blacksmith shop and remains of a brick plant in this 'ghost town'.

Elaine next moved on to newspaper articles telling of hunting and fishing in the county, where overkill may have contributed to largely reduced numbers of game in our county.

The little known facts behind the naming of Linfield College were covered, as was the burial on campus of the Rev. Riley and his wife, pursuant to their wills.

Next, she talked about Lafayette, how it once thrived as the center of business and county government, and how this all changed with the advent of the first bank in the county in McMinnville, founded by Jacob Wortman.

Next, listeners were treated to the UFO sighting by Paul Trent and his wife Evelyn in May of 1950. Phil Bladine, then publisher of the Telephone Register, published the photo Paul took of that craft and it was soon national news. The T-R sold countless thousands of copies of that first UFO sighting issue for 10 cents each, postage included, to people around the globe.

Elaine went on to discuss little known facts about steamboat travel and the locks on the Yamhill, and the origins of the current McMinnville city hall. You had to be present to learn how the streets in McMinnville came to be named and renamed. She also discussed Whiteson, the once thriving railroad town, and Wheatland, the center of shipping on the west side of the Willamette.

Every town and city in the county was mentioned in her presentation, and she concluded by noting the fact that there are many more secrets to be found in the Museum belonging to our society.

Everyone who has heard Elaine speak knows of her unbridled enthusiasm and wonderful sense of humor, and she certainly did not disappoint our members and guests with this presentation. Thanks, Elaine.

From our President...

Hi Friends,

The ballots are out from First Federal for your vote. Remember to include the Yamhill County Historical Society as your choice. We appreciate your helping us to receive funds from this establishment. First Federal is a community oriented business that has been very generous to our Society.

Marjorie Owens, Kathy Peck and myself spent an afternoon last week with Dorothy Gunness at her Pacific City home. Dorothy grew up in Yamhill County and has collected a huge amount of the history on her pioneer family, and Yamhill County with written information and pictures. The Wortman's were Dorothy's family. They established the first bank in McMinnville located on the corner across from the 1893 building on 3rd St. As a result of Marjorie's request for old phone books or obituaries from the early 1900's, Dorothy called and offered to donate what she had. Her Great Grandfather Jacob Wortman had a bulletin board in the bank where the obituaries were posted. He placed these all in alphabetical order in a wooden file cabinet which Dorothy gave to the museum. It was a pleasant day for visiting and reminiscing in Dorothy's home which is located on the river. Dorothy also has several other items that in time will be donated for use at the museum.

Twila Byrnes also donated numerous obituary notices from her collection. We thank them for their response to Marjorie's request.

We understand that Jim Lockett is out and about. We hope he is feeling much better and look forward to seeing Jim and Reita at one of our upcoming meetings. Sincerely, Shirley

Tea Party Loans

If you loaned any items to the Tea Party in December and you are still awaiting its return, please stop by the Museum on any Wednesday between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. or call the museum during that time so that arrangements can be made for their return. Your loan contributed to a successful party, and was much appreciated.

The Yamhill County Historical Society is a nonprofit tax exempt educational and public service corporation established to protect, preserve and share the history and heritage of Yamhill County

OFFICERS - 2004President

Shirley Venhaus
472-7328

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843-2069

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843-2625

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Nancy Mahi
472-9272

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662-3528

Volunteer Coordinators

Position open

Newsletter

Dan Linscheid 843
-2625

Car Pool Coordinator

Joanne Watts 835
-5893

Librarian

Jean Sartor

MUSEUM HOURS

November 13 - May 31:
Sat. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

or

By Appointment
(Friday openings after
May 31st depend on
finding volunteers)
605 Market Street
Lafayette Oregon
Phone: 864-2308
Email: yamhillhistory@
onlinemac.com

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YCHS

Board Meeting Highlights

Note: below are summarized notes of the minutes. Please visit the museum if you'd like to see the full minutes. The meeting on January 11, 2005, was attended by the following officers and Board members: Marjorie Owens, Nancy Mahi, Shirley Venhaus, Shirley McDaniel, Barbara Knutson, Eileen Lewis, Annita Linscheid, Carol Reid, Dan Linscheid and Kathy Peck. **Treasurer** Carol Reid reported a beginning balance of \$5,612.73, expenses of \$2,843.05, and deposits of \$1,754.92, resulting in a balance of \$4,884.60. **Correspondence Secretary** Marjorie Owens reported five items of correspondence. **Membership Secretary** Kathy Peck had no report. **Volunteer Chairperson:** Carol Reid had no report; she will be stepping down from that position. **Old Business:** Cultural Trust: A total of \$3,800 was donated through the Cultural Trust for the year 2004 to YCHS, with \$500 specifically allocated to the new Museum. A report has not been received from MACA as yet. **Pioneer Cemetery:** All documents are complete and the originals are in the safety deposit box at the bank. Marjorie had someone ask her about a key to the gate on the property, so someone will look into the possibility of getting that key. **John's Waterproofing contract:** YCHS put \$500.00 down for work on the curtain drain. Shirley and Marjorie did a walk-around with them to make sure the work being contracted for is exactly what we need. The work will be completed no later than January 31st. **Bug Problem:** After comparing the two bids we've received it was conditionally decided to have Bug Busters do the job, if they really agreed to fumigate the barn quarterly free of charge. This will include an ongoing program for bug control in all three buildings quarterly and fumigation in the barn. **Museum Report:** Marjorie stated she had a great response to her plea in the last news letter for old phone books. Marjorie and Shirley V. will be making a trip to see Dorothy Gunness to look at some articles she would like to donate to the museum. Marjorie also said she has had no Saturday volunteers to help out. She would appreciate a volunteer to be responsible for the church building. **New Business: Steering Committee Report:** Board Members received copies of the Steering Committee's Dec. 3rd meeting. The committee met with an architect at the site of proposed new building on Jan. 7th, and he shared his ideas with that committee. Shirley would like him to meet with the Board in March.

Board Meeting Highlights cont.

The storage building on the property is finished and the old lumber is now under cover. YCHS be given a copy of the year-end financial report. **Oregon Museums Association dues and guide book:** \$100.00 will be sent to cover the next two years dues. **Old School House:** Shirley is in contact with the owners of the Eagle Point school house and the possibility of donating that building and moving it onto the new property. A grant from the Retired Teachers Association for moving and preservation might be a possibility to look into if the donation is made. **Policy for Requesting Funds:** There will be a form to fill out for the request of funds designating which line item they are being requested from and what they are intended to be used for. This will help tidy up record keeping. Carol had also produced a form for volunteers to use in claiming their contributions for their personal tax purposes. **Budget:** Copies of the final draft of the 2005 budget was passed out having been already approved. An amendment to that budget was passed to transfer the monies received from Cultural Trust from the Steering Committee to line #14 of the general fund, in keeping with the wishes of the donors. Eileen Lewis has had contact with a potential donor of a thematic artifact collection to YCHS. The donor would like to know if we would accept it in its entirety to basically keep it intact. The Board was in agreement to accept it. Respectfully, Annita Linscheid, Secretary.

A Special Thanks to our Cultural Trust donors:

Our society would like to thank the following people who donated funds to the Society through the Cultural Trust: **Ron Davison, Willamette West Realty, Mike & Jodi Boundy, Barry House, Colin Armstrong, and Mary Jo Capps.** Again we thank you for your generosity and support.

The Founding of Dayton

By Dan Linscheid

Visitors entering the Town of Dayton from the south are welcomed by a beautiful wooden sign letting them know that the town was founded in 1845. This date appears to be in error.

An article in the News-Register relates the first settlement in what is now known as Dayton, discovered on January 23, 1814 by David Thompson, an explorer with the Hudsons Bay Company. He found a bunch of "idle Indians squatting around on the bank of the Yamhill" when he pitched his overnight camp there. During his overnight stay, a couple of light-fingered bucks pilfered some of the Scotsman's equipment. This bothered him so much he made note of the theft in his journal: "The Yamhelas who live in houses on the yellow river, a branch of the Willamette, are very great rogues—but not very numerous".¹

Joel Palmer was born in Elizabeth, Canada, on February 10, 1810. He traveled to Oregon in 1845, leaving his family behind in Illinois. He spent that winter traveling around Oregon, and he kept copious notes on soil types, water supplies, natural vegetation, timber, animal life, the weather and rain fall.²

Joel established a claim ten miles west of Corvallis on the Marys River, along with another claim he set aside for his brother-in-law, James Derbyshire, about three miles south of Dayton. In the spring of 1846 he returned to Illinois, returning to Oregon with his family in 1847. While in the East, he had a journal of his Oregon travels published.

On his return he discovered his Marys River claim had been jumped. In those early days, the location of land claims were very loosely described. A typical description of one of these might read "Beginning at an Oak tree near the southwest corner of so-and-so's claim; thence west one mile, south one mile, east one mile to a small creek and thence north to the place of beginning." It is no wonder so many claims were jumped during this period. Since his brother-in-law did not come to Oregon, he moved onto the claim south of Dayton. One day while cutting logs for a cabin with future business partner Chris Taylor and another man named Wright, he got news of the Whitman Massacre. Their unease over this caused them to set out for Oregon City to see how the loosely knit government would respond to the incident. On the way down, near the Chehalem Gap, they were met by a messenger from the provisional government, which had commissioned Joel as the Quarter Master and Commissary General, and requesting his presence in Oregon City immediately. This was the first time he was called General, and the name stuck with him the rest of his life. He was also appointed one of several commissioners to treat with the Indians. This effort resulted in a split of the Nez Perce and Walla Walla tribes from the Cayuse, apparent perpetrators of the massacre.

With the discovery of gold in California, Joel was in one of the first groups to head for the fields in the fall of '48. Between 1848 and 1849, he was successful only in making \$2000 in his gold seeking efforts. In the latter year he returned by boat to Oregon. The following June (1850) he laid out the town of Dayton.

During these early years Joel's family was living in Oregon City. In June of 1848, his daughter Sarah married Andrew Smith, who had a claim in Yamhill County. Joel's family is found in the March, 1849 census residing in Clackamas county, and a Palmer son was born there in the fall of 1849.

Joel sold his interest in his claim south of Dayton to William Graham for \$100. He bought part of Andrew Smiths land where Dayton now stands, then proceeded to add more land until his new claim totaled up to 450 acres.³

He laid out the town so that it was partially on his son-in-laws land, the division line run-

ning down Main street.. He built a house and a hotel there at that time. Prior to 1850, the town had been referred to only as Smiths Ferry. Over the next couple of years he built a sawmill on a stream feeding the Yamhill, later to be known as Palmer Creek. Dayton was named after Dayton, Ohio. In 1853, Joel and others from the area started a push to get the county seat moved there from Lafayette.⁴ After the courthouse fire of January, 1857, an election was held and Dayton was unsuccessful in this relocation attempt, but the city park was shown on the first town plat as the Court House Square. This plat was recorded in the office of the county recorder in 1865. It was incorporated on October 15, 1880, at the time having a population of 375.

Joel first married Catherine Caffey, with whom he had three daughters. Of this marriage, only a daughter named Sarah survived. He next married Sarah Derbyshire of Pennsylvania in 1836, and they later had six children. Not much is in our records of this lady, but one must keep in mind the fact that she was able to serve as both parents to their children for the most part during their early years in Oregon, while her husband was busy serving the government, dealing with Indian problems, seeking gold, and starting businesses in early Dayton, not to mention subsequent terms with the Oregon Legislature. He passed away on June 9, 1881. In summary, by nearly all accounts, Dayton was in fact founded in the spring of 1850, and no record has been found to substantiate the 1845 founding date.

Notes:

¹ *N-R centennial Edition (1959) section B*

² *Early Western Travels, by R.G. Thwaites, LL D., Vol 30, p 16.*

³ *Interview of Palmer by H.H. Bancroft in June of 1878.*

⁴ *Dayton Centennial 1880-1980*

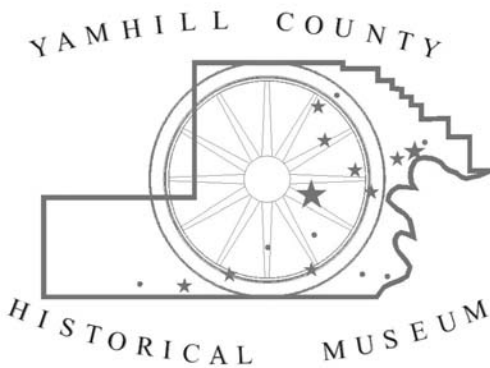


YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Lafayette Oregon 97127

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YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
EST. 1957

Dated Material - Return Service Requested

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES **Effective May 31, 2002**

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$15
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Friend	\$50+
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporter	\$100+
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Builder	\$250+
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Please make checks payable to the Yamhill County Historical Society. Annual membership gifts are tax deductible.

Members receive the Westside newsletter and access to our research library free of charge. We are an all volunteer organization, and are constantly on the lookout for new helpers. If you can assist us in any way, financially or with your time or talents, it will be greatly appreciated. If you are not sure if you have paid your membership dues, please contact Carol Reid at 472-9631, or **check your mailing label, which should show this information also. (The month and year indicate your "paid through" period according to our records.)** If you see a colored notice inside your newsletter, you're at the end of your membership term!

YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Calendar of Events

Board of Directors: 4:30 p.m., Tuesday, February 8th. Our next **regular monthly meeting** will be held Tuesday, February 8th at 6:30 p.m. Both meetings will be held at the McMinnville Seventh Day Adventist Church. Our program this month will be Virginia Johnson relating Laura Hawn Perkins Patterson.

New Members/Renewals: We welcome renewing members Ken Williams, Elizabeth Baltzell, Richard Ulrich, Barbara Doyle, Christie Wyman, Patricia Harding, Diane Kroll, Mary Jo Capps, Rosemary Vertregt and Mina Hansen..
Thanks for supporting our organization.