

# The West Side

Newsletter and Journal of the Yamhill County Historical Society

March 2002

## Board Highlights

Roll Call: The meeting was called to order by President Shirley Venhaus at 5:07 pm. The following signed in: Eileen Lewis, Barbara Knutsen, Marjorie Owens, Ed Roghair, Dan Linscheid, Betty Brown, Francis H. Dummer, Shirley Venhaus, Shirley McDaniel. Members Barbara Doyle and Barbara Hinman also attended.

Treasurer's Report: Betty Brown presented written reports. January income: \$520.52; expenses \$1,193.41; net - \$672.89. The water/sewer bill has gone up. Shirley Venhaus checked on this and we will pay only one monthly charge, for water used in the log museum. The electricity charge has gone way up and we are looking at ways to insulate and do other work at the museum to check the heat loss.

Volunteer Chair: Eileen Lewis reports one new volunteer who is working with Marjorie and one volunteer who will be working in the garden. The grass needs to be cut before the next tour of students which is scheduled for February 21st.

Old Business: The Antique/Collectable Appraisal Day, scheduled for June 29, 2002 has been named Treasures in the Attic. Joanne Watts and Barbara Doyle are working on this project. Suggested prices for appraisals are \$3.00 each or four items for \$10.00. Several appraisers will be available.

Oregon Heritage Commission has awarded YCHS \$320.51. This grant is for improving museum services. We have put the money into the fund for reprinting Old Yamhill. A report at the end of the year will be made to the commission.

Publications Report: a letter has been received from the publisher of Old Yamhill, agreeing to publish with one-half of the money submitted now and the rest at a later date. We have had donations enough for the first half. Now we need money to pay for the second half. These books will be sold for \$20.00 each, which is still a bargain in today's book market. It was moved and approved to ask Shirley V. secure a contract from the publisher and proceed with printing. It will take about ten weeks for the books to become available.

A PGE Energy Report has been received. Discussion was held on how to implement the suggested improvements to help contain our electricity costs. We will look into a major funding grant that will help get this and other improvements under way. Barbara Doyle will help with this. New Business: A hearing will be held in Salem on February 26th regarding placement of the Poling Church on the Historic Preservation listing. Shirley Venhaus will attend. A special program will be held for the society on August 13, 7:00 - 9:00 pm at the Yamhill Co. Public works building by Al Le Page, with Pacific Northwest Trails. The county Genealogical Society will meet for a program on May 4 from 9 - 12, and has asked for a guest speaker from our group for this event. We've similarly been asked by them to speak on April 6th at 12:00 for about a half hour. Dan will be the speaker for their program on June 1st. The house across the street from the museum is for sale. Someone from our society will look into it. A new publication, the "Oregon Burial Site Guide Book" has been put on our "Wish List". An email has been received regarding any duplicate books we might have for sale.

Fund Raising Committee Report: Marjorie gave a verbal and written report for us to study with many suggestions from other museums about their fund raising ideas and practices. Barbara Hinman proposes a project to clean up the west fence line & hedge in back of the museum to be performed between February and mid-May. We will consider making a YCHS "rack card" to be put up with similar tourist cards at locations around our county and other museums. We need donated items (about \$10.00 in value) for the "non-raffles" at our meetings, and someone to check with businesses who might donate items. To date, most of these items have been purchased out-of-pocket by Board mem-

## The Nomadic Teacher

At our February meeting, Barbara Doyle presented us with an overview of the program she gives to 4th grade classrooms around the county. She has many hands-on items to help the students in gaining an understanding of the trip across the Oregon Trail, early pioneer life in our area, as well as the Native American life and culture in the 1840's and '50's. Barbara sets the mood with a life-sized cutout of the floor of the typical wagon used in crossing the Oregon Trail. Actual tools and other artifacts as well as drawings of plants valued by the natives give our students a better understanding of early life in the Yamhill valley. Barbara has obviously done her homework, and she ended her presentation with a question and answer period. Thanks, Barbara, for a great show and tell.

## From Our President:

Thanks to 2 generous donations we have the \$2500 required to request the printing of the book "Old Yamhill". This initial money will pay for 250 copies of a 500 printing. A specific time period will be established for us to raise the balance of \$2500 for the additional 250 books. At this time we have a balance of \$450 set aside for that purpose. Anyone who would like to donate toward this project, please contact a member of the board. The minimum amount the printing company would print was 500. We will probably need to increase the amount charged for this book. It will take approximately 10 weeks to complete this printing. This book is a very important part of the information concerning the history of Yamhill County. It was written by Ruth Stoller. The copyright was transferred to the printing company with the stipulation that they would reprint it for 50% of the sales price of the book. We thank all of you for helping with this and a big "Thank you" to the 2 anonymous donors. Don't forget to volunteer to help with 'Treasurers in the Attic' event coming up in June. We need lots of people helping with this. It will be a fun event.

Committees continue to look for ways to make money, cut expenses and pay for the up-keep of the buildings in the museum complex. This will be an on-going project for many years to come.

A word from the wise: DO NOT DROP YOUR CELL PHONE IN A GLASS OF PEPSI!!!! Hope you all had a fine Valentine's Day. Seems like a short month. Sincerely, Shirley

*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*

<p><b><u>OFFICERS - 2002</u></b></p> <p><u>President</u> Shirley Venhaus 472-7328</p> <p><u>VP/Program</u> Barbara Knutson 843-2069</p> <p><u>Secretary (Joint)</u> Shirley McDaniel 662-3528 Eileen Crawley 835-3673</p> <p><u>Treasurer</u> Betty Brown 472-7100</p> <p><u>Financial Secretary</u> Lila Jackson 472-8510</p> <p><u>Corres. Secretary</u> Marjorie Owens 843-3081</p> <p><u>Board of Directors</u> Eileen Lewis 835-7531 Ed Roghair 472-6909 Francis Dummer 864-2637 Dan Linscheid 843-2625</p> <p><u>Volunteer Coordinator</u> Eileen Lewis 835-7531</p> <p><u>Librarian</u> Olive Merry Johnson 472-6070</p> <p><u>Newsletter</u> Dan Linscheid 843-2625</p> <p><u>Car Pool Coordinator</u> Joanne Watts 835 -5893</p>	<p><b><u>TREASURES IN THE ATTIC</u></b></p> <p>YCHS is preparing to bring "TREASURES IN THE ATTIC" (an Antique Appraisal event) to Yamhill County on June 29th, 2002. This will be held at the museum complex and will be open to the public. Appraisers from many different areas of expertise will be on hand. This is a fundraiser for the society and a small charge will be made for the appraisals.</p> <p>There are many details left to plan and we are looking for volunteers. If you are interested in helping please call Joanne Watts 835-5893 or Shirley Venhaus 434-0567</p>	<p><b><u>A Plea for help</u></b></p> <p>Has your winter utility bill gone sky high? Imagine having to pay \$600 per month for heat and lights! This is the primary reason we continue to draw money from our money market account. Members are encouraged to help with this dilemma by submitting a check, made out to YCHS, for \$5 or \$10, writing "for utilities" in the lower left-hand corner. Or perhaps a donation could be made for this specific cause. Your Board is working hard to resolve this problem, but it appears every solution causes secondary problems. Our monthly water bill is currently being paid by our "un-affle", which yields about \$60 per month. Only a couple of people have stepped up to purchase these gifts on their own, and you are encouraged to assist with this popular program. Thank you.</p>
<p><b><u>MUSEUM HOURS</u></b></p> <p><b>June 1 thru August 31</b> Fri-Sat-Sun 1 to 4 PM or By Appointment</p> <p>605 Market Street Lafayette Oregon Phone: 864-2308</p> <p><b><u>ANNUAL DUES</u></b></p> <p><b>\$10.00 Individual</b> <b>\$17.00 Family</b> <b>\$125.00 Life</b></p> <p>Mail to: Financial Secretary 2430 North Baker McMinnville OR 97128</p> <p>© 2002 YCHS</p>	<p><b><u>Special Presentation Scheduled</u></b></p> <p>August 13th of this year will see a very special presentation for our society. In mid-August of 1826, Alexander Roderick McLeod passed through the Yamhill valley on his way back from the central Oregon coast. He and Peter Skene Ogden were Chief Fur Traders for Hudson's Bay Company. Mr. Ogden's travels took him easterly and southerly, while Mr. McLeod went south and west from Fort Vancouver.</p> <p>Al Le Page, Executive Director of the National Coast Trail Association, will give a two hour presentation focusing on the trails and experiences of Mr. McLeod's trip through Yamhill County 176 years ago, almost to the day. Al has a one hour slide show, which will be followed up with another half-hour of general discussion and wrapping up with a question and answer period. You will need to mark this one on your calendar, since it was scheduled too late to be published earlier. This presentation will take place at 7:00 p.m. at the Yamhill County Public Works Auditorium. This will not be one of our normal potluck meetings, so be ready for a well-prepared and fast-paced presentation with a local focus.</p>	<p><b><u>Study Results</u></b></p> <p>Marjorie Owens put together a data sheet listing her findings regarding how other Museums &amp; Historical Societies operate in the area. Seven Museums were asked various questions, in an effort to help us evaluate ways of cutting costs and/or generating revenues. Here are some of her findings: <b>Admission fees</b>, five are donations (one of which has a suggested \$3 Adult and \$1 children suggestion), one charges \$3 for Adults, \$2 for Seniors, and school kids \$1, and one charges \$2 Adult, \$1.50 Senior and \$0.50 for kids. <b>Staffing levels</b>: four facilities have paid staff, one has 1/2 paid, the East Linn County/Sweet Home facility is all volunteer as is the Polk County Museum. <b>Budget</b>: revenues range all over the board, from 60% county support (N. Lincoln Co./ Lincoln City) to city paying utilities, to no outside support. Endowments and special donations help the Benton County Museum stay afloat, together with some tax support approved by voters a few years ago. Five out of the seven have some support from outside governmental entities. <b>Charges for Services</b>: None of the seven charge for research services, unless it is being done for profit. However, all charge for copies and photo reproductions. <b>Size</b>: Polk, 400 members, N. Lincoln, no society, but \$10/\$15 membership for Seniors/individuals. Benton County, no society or regular meetings. Tillamook, 2700 members, no monthly meeting. Independence &amp; Woodburn, no society, all volunteer Boards. E. Linn County, same as ours in terms of monthly meetings, dues and a volunteer Board. <b>Events</b>: no uniformity on this one... they all vary from quilt shows to money raising event to a paid person to give tours of the city (Woodburn) and historical homes. Several have additional fund raising events similar to our scheduled Appraisal fair, Christmas Bazaars, etc. Please help the YCHS by letting us know your thoughts on these.</p>

Mr. Louis La Bonte was an early Oregon Settler, probably a decade before the Oregon Trail made history! He took a land claim in the early 1830's on the peninsula between the Yamhill and Willamette Rivers. His home place became "La Bonte's Landing."

Louis, a French Canadian, born in Montreal, Canada (either 1780 or 1790), was on the John Jacob Astor expedition to Astoria in 1812. When the Astor group failed to establish a foothold in the fur business they sold what was left to the Hudson Bay Company in 1814 and moved out. After deciding to stay and work for the British Company, Louis, being French-Canadian, was welcomed by the company and spent the next 20 years as a company trapper.

While working as a trapper, he met and married a Chinook Indian girl, Kila-Kotah, meaning, "Little Songbird". She was the daughter of Chief Kobaway.

When his son, Louis Jr., was born, Louis happily planned to settle in the Willamette Valley. He moved his family to Champoege as soon as he received his discharge from the Company. As his time for discharge approached Louis found that his dreams might not be realized. Doctor McLoughlin said, "You want to go to farming over there? Impossible, La Bonte! It's against the Company rules. You'll have to get your discharge in Montreal."

Company rules required employees to be discharged at their place of employment. Since Louis had joined the Hudson Bay Company at Astoria he felt he should be discharged in the north-west. However, the Montreal rule prevented trappers from staying and competing with the Hudson Bay company. (They certainly didn't want their fur territory being farmed.) Dr. McLoughlin would not even consider that Louis had signed on in Oregon. He needed to go to Montreal to collect his pay (plus a nice bonus) for the past ten years. What a dilemma!

One clear night on the Columbia, the La Bontes sat around the fire talking. What should they do? Louis needed his pay to start farming but Kila-Kotah did not want him to leave. Robert Case thought their conversation might have been: "It is final, p'tite-you cannot go to Montreal with me. The winters are too cold. The people are strange. This is your country."

"Then stay here, Louis," she said in a low voice. "Come with me to my tribe. My father is Comcomly's right-hand man. Comcomly will protect us. All that long way? No, you will drown, or be lost in the deep snow, or die of thirst on the plains."

"Not I," said La Bonte. "Hush, it is far to Montreal ... s o far that two winters will pass before I see y o u again. So remember what I tell you now ...I have seen no country more beautiful than the valley of the Willamette. I shall meet no finer woman than you, Cherie. There are no rapids, nor deep snows, nor desert that can stop Louis la Bonte... So wait for me. Keep your campfire burning do not lose heart. I will be back."

Louis' decision to go to Montreal pleased Dr. McLoughlin. He was sure Louis would never come back. Kila-kotah was terribly worried that she would never see Louis again.

In Montreal, Louis was discharged and paid his contracted sum of money. He immediately announced that he was returning to Oregon. After a farewell party and a long walk (8000-mile round trip) he arrived at Fort Vancouver! Kila-kotah was overjoyed. Dr. McLoughlin was furious. Robert Case suggests that their conversation might have gone as follows: "Louis la Bonte!" The doctor sat back, scowling. "What are you doing here? I thought you went to Montreal a couple of years ago?" "I did, m'sieu. And I have come back again."

"So I see," the doctor said grimly. "Why?"

"To take my family to the Willamette Valley", La Bonte said with humility. "To the place called Champoege. With your permission, m'sieu - I have my discharge from the Company," he hurried on. "I am a free man now. If you will let me have the few supplies that I need I will pay you back after I have had time--"

"That's enough!" the doctor roared. "Sell him a few supplies, he says! Didn't I warn you not to come back here?"

However, when the Doctor took stalk of what had happened -knowing every foot of the trail to Montreal-he sat in wonder at what Louis la Bonte had done. Two years and 8000 miles! How could he not help such a man so loyal to his family and dreams. He gave Louis credit, the help of several men, and a boat to get him where he wanted to go. There were conditions, however. Dr. McLoughlin told Louis that he must live south of the Columbia and sell his produce to the Hudson Bay Company. The Doctor knew that this was just the beginning of a flood of settlers-many of them his own men-moving to the Willamette Valley. It was fine with Louis to move south because the Willamette and Yamhill areas were favored land. Since many French Canadians settled in the Champoege-St. Paul area, it became known as *French Prairie*. In 1836, Louis filed a claim two miles down the Yamhill River from the present location of Dayton, Oregon. This is where they settled, had two more children, -Julian and Victoria-and farmed.

Later, in 1841, Lt. Charles Wilkes, on his 85,000 mile exploration voyage for the United States, visited the La Bonte farm. He wrote in his diary that Louis had one of the best farms in the area and was a man who hunted, fished, and worked when he pleased. (His "Cherie" did most of the daily chores and farming.)

Louis and his family were there when the first emigrants began to settle in the valley. He provided advice, help, and even sold land to some of the pioneers. His skill and understanding of the land and the Indians was important to the overlanders as they struggled to make their place in the west.

Soon Louis began to see boats running up the Yamhill River. They always stopped at La Bonte Landing. Louis enjoyed visiting with the crews, giving them refreshments, and selling them items they needed.

Finally, Louis moved back to St. Paul where he died at about 80 years old. He was interned at St. Paul cemetery. He was an amazing man who modeled a "can do" spirit for many of the emigrants who were yet to come.

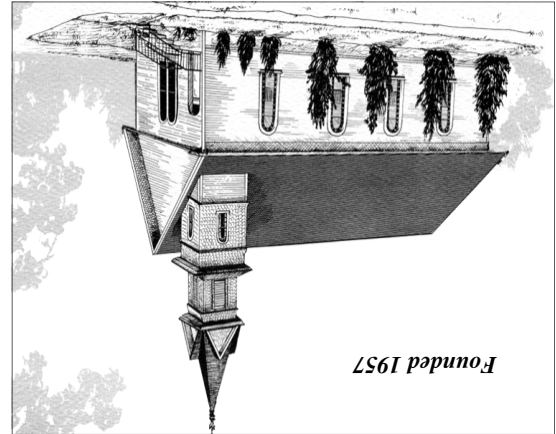
OSU's Professor of Archaeology, David Brauner, has been doing work in the French Prairie area, between the Willamette river and Woodburn, and is presenting interesting new ideas about Oregon History. The history is fairly well known but generally ignored by historians.

Professor Brauner shows that these people had a profound effect upon the development of Oregon. He reports "...a significant number of French Canadian employees of the Hudson's Bay Company ...did begin settling ...between 1829 and 1843." He says, "I'm convinced that when the first immigrant train arrived in Oregon City in 1843, it was not greeted by a virgin wilderness but was witness to a partially settled landscape whose population had already developed suitable agricultural strategies for the successful exploitation of the best farm land in the valley":

OSU's Alumni Association Magazine, "Oregon Stater" of December 2001 reports "from this, Brauner draws a simple conclusion: The success of many of the first American farmsteads may well be attributed to the experience and guidance of the Metis (French Canadians) community, a position he will put forth in an upcoming book on the subject and one that is destined to rewrite the early history of the state."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The Empire Builders" by Robert Orman Case. Published by Binford and Mort, Portland, Oregon, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> A special thanks to George Williams for calling attention to this article.



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***YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY***

## **YAMHILL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

### *February 2002 Calendar of Events*

**Board of Directors - Tuesday, March 12th, 5:00 pm**  
**Willamina Free Methodist Church, 235 E. "D" St.**

**Monthly Meeting & Potluck—March 12th, 6:30 pm**  
**Willamina Free Methodist Church, 235 E. "D" St.**

Our March Program will be on The History of the Willamina Museum, presented by April Wooten. We'll tour the Museum (across the street) after the program. Please join us for dinner and potluck fare; bring your own dinnerware.

Visit our Historical Photograph Album at <http://www.co.yamhill.or.us> and our YCHS website at <http://www.sites.onlinemac.com/history>  
email : [History@starband.net](mailto:History@starband.net) (Dan Linscheid)